

Taken from Colorado's Coaches Handbook

Coaching Do's & Don't's

COACHING DO'S

Do teach your students the creative problem-solving process and use it throughout the problem solution.
Do help students to understand that winning is not the goal. The process of getting there is the important thing-not the competition.

Do help students to see and recognize the abilities of each team member and encourage team members to capitalize on the individual strengths of ALL.

Do encourage growth through each new experience.

Do help them get organized and notice of the importance of keeping a schedule and meeting deadlines.

Do help them expand their minds, dig deeper, and come up with more creative ideas.

Do work with teams on the spontaneous problem part of the program. Do try always to answer a question with a question.

Do help them give and take constructive criticism of IDEAS but avoid insulting and insensitive personal remarks.

Do be willing to admit you don't know everything and encourage your team to get help from others.

Do help them to learn how to evaluate their ideas and progress continually throughout each aspect of the problem solution.

Do go over the score results with the team after a competition to help it improve in the future

Do set a good example of adult behavior and by all means be a good role model for your team and others.

Do let your team members know you are human. Do be a quiet "guide on the side" or the "sage on the stage."

COACHING DON'TS

Don't tell them how to solve the problem, but rather ask questions that help them think it through.

Don't allow any criticism of teammates' personalities or physical attributes—no cutting remarks.

Don't step in on their disagreements. Let them work it out as part of learning to work on a team.

Don't limit creativity by setting restrictions that are too tight or which reflect your own, perhaps limited, vision.

Don't get disturbed when teams make mistakes along the way. This part of the learning process.

Don't allow students to be irresponsible. Help them realize this hinders the entire team.

Don't make them feel like they have failed if they don't win. Failing is only when they won't try again.

Don't complain about other teams, coaches or judges.

Don't allow teams to prepare a problem solution which knowingly goes against the Spirit of the Problem or any of the limitations given in the problem itself. READ, READ AND REREAD THE PROBLEM AND THEN READ SOME MORE.

Don't dispute a judge's ruling without explaining why to the students. Always be sure your dispute is valid and the team wishes to carry it further.

Don't get uptight. Remember that the members are the ones who have to know everything or find out. You are the coach and are not supposed to produce the problem solution.

Relax and enjoy seeing these young, creative minds at work!

The Art of Asking Questions

Art of Asking Questions

Often coaches will say, "How can I get my team to solve problems without giving them outside assistance?" The key is asking good open-ended questions that will facilitate the team's work without leading them to solutions.

- ◆ Do you think any other team would think of this?
- ◆ Can you think of a more creative way to do this?
- ◆ What other materials could be used to (create this effect, to make this move, to make it lighter in weight, to make it funnier, etc.)?
- ◆ What kinds of things do we need to find out in order to do this?
- ◆ How else could you....?
- ◆ Why did this happen?
- ◆ Where could you find out?
- ◆ Is this your best...?
- ◆ Can you think of a better way to do that?
- ◆ Can you think of a different way to do that?
- ◆ Does this meet the standard?
- ◆ Is this job done?
- ◆ What should be done?
- ◆ When should it be done?
- ◆ Who should do it?
- ◆ Can this be tested?
- ◆ Can we combine ideas?
- ◆ Why is it necessary?
- ◆ How else could this be arranged?
- ◆ What should come next?
- ◆ What makes sense? What makes nonsense?
- ◆ What could be said? What could be left unsaid?
- ◆ What are the pros of your solution? What are the cons?
- ◆ Are you satisfied with your idea/work/solution/performance?
- ◆ Do you feel like you are “in the box” or “out of the box”?
- ◆ Have you considered where the points are?
- ◆ To help them "fine tune"..... "do you think it is the best that you can do?"
- ◆ If you were judging this problem how would you score your solution?
- ◆ Are there easy points – the ones the team could count on every time? Are there more risky points? Why?
- ◆ Are you respectful of your team members' ideas?
- ◆ What do you think each of your team members strengths are?
- ◆ Are your team members' strengths being utilized?
- ◆ If you were coaching this team how would you handle this conflict?
- ◆ If you were coaching this team where would you take the team to have a run afternoon off?
- ◆ Can you think of a good field trip that would relate to your problem?
- ◆ Will it fit through a door?
- ◆ How will you get “it” to competition? If we only have a car, will it fit in a car? A van? Will we need a truck? A trailer?
- ◆ Will it fit in a van (or whatever is being used to transport props/backgrounds to competition)?
- ◆ Can you check out the survivability of the prop?
- ◆ If something doesn't work....."what would be another way of doing it?"
- ◆ "Why do you think it didn't work? To look at all possibilities....."did you listen to everyone's suggestions in your group"
- ◆ If they don't know how..... "where else could you go for materials and information?"
- ◆ Create "what if scenarios..."
- ◆ What if the lighting in our performance room is dim? Would this color on the back drop What if we are in a gym? Would the sound effects be as effective? What could you do to be ready?
- ◆ How many people will it take to move it?
- ◆ What are you most proud of? Why?
- ◆ What is the neatest part of your solution?
- ◆ What makes your performance really shine?

For Style:

- ◆ What do we mean by style?
- ◆ What would you like to use for your free choice elements?
- ◆ Why are these elements special?

Staying On Track

Help your team throughout the entire season by encouraging them to set deadlines for what they would like to have completed and by when. This will reduce the “panic” that inevitably sets in as the tournament date approaches. Creative team members could create, create and create the whole entire season without really producing anything. As a coach, take the time up front at the beginning of the process for the team to discuss monthly goals. At the beginning of each month, review the monthly goals from the past month.

Have the team evaluate themselves on what they accomplished and what was not get accomplished. Then help the team problem solve what needs to be done to get back on track, what they can let go of and what needs more work. At this time the team can also review the upcoming month and prioritize what needs to be done, how it will get done and what resources are needed to achieve their goal. This will involve them in the process and help them own what they want to work on with regards to their long term solution, spontaneous and style.

You are not alone when the team begins to panic as the tournament date approaches. There probably is not one team that has everything done on time. Because the problems are written so broadly, they can be solved numerous ways and it is the nature of creative teams to keep thinking of different solutions. Help the team by deciding whether an idea can be incorporated and it enhances their solution or is it an idea that can be saved till next year.

Setting Team Expectations

When team members understand what is expected of them, they are more likely to be successful both individually and as a team. It is helpful at the beginning of the season for the team to discuss group norms. In other words, what do the team members expect of each other? This helps the team ensure they all know what is and is not acceptable behavior. For younger team, it is recommended that the Group Norm be reviewed at the beginning of the first several practices. For all ages, it is recommended that a flip chart of the team’s Group Norms be posted at each practice as reminder to everyone. Some suggestions to get the team started are:

- ◆ Commitment from beginning to end
- ◆ Assign duties and meet deadlines
- ◆ Attend meetings regularly
- ◆ Remember your coach is a volunteer, respect their time
- ◆ Stay focus
- ◆ Clean up each time
- ◆ Appropriate behavior and language
- ◆ Ask for help when you need it
- ◆ Accept what cannot be changed
- ◆ Be honest with yourself and others
- ◆ Respect the skills, opinions, thoughts, and feelings of others
- ◆ Learn from the past, work in the present, think about the future

Understanding Strengths of Team Members

Team members come in all shapes and working styles and understanding what each likes to do is a big step to keeping it fun! Some will prefer the brainstorming while others would prefer to work on the props. Some have talents with the building of props and scenery, while others would rather work on enhancing the Style elements. Some like developing the story line and script while others like figuring out the best way to say the lines. Consider having the team members complete a survey of what they like to do, what they don’t like to do and their talents.

I like to...	Yes	Sometimes	No	I would like to learn
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Create new things				
Build with wood & use tools				
Sing				
Act				
Use the computer				
Dance				
Assemble things				
Decorate with crafts				
Write				
Come up with ideas				
Improve ideas				
Put ideas into action				
Sew				
Paint				
Build contraptions or work with machines				
Tell jokes & make people laugh				

Bringing In Experts

Even though your team may have lots of experience with Odyssey of the Mind and/or other activities, you may still want to bring in experts to teach your team a skill or maybe just to be a different messenger. You may have experts dropping off and picking up team members on a regular basis in the form of parents. Many parents have talents from which your team can benefit. Just like team members, parents come with many different backgrounds and experience. Take a few moments to get to know the parents of your team members and what interests them. Other experts come in the form of teachers. Teachers in the areas of art, music, drama, tech, shop, consumer sciences, etc. can teach skills to your team without you having to know it all. Additional experts can be found in your local community, service groups, churches and community colleges. Below is a list of some of the ways experts have taught team members:

- ◆ Constructing principles
- ◆ Robotics & electronics
- ◆ Sewing
- ◆ Arts & crafts
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Dancing
- ◆ Computers
- ◆ Theatre
- ◆ Teambuilding
- ◆ Managing a large project
- ◆ Engineering