

## **This information was taken from Colorado's Coaches Handbook**

### **SECTION 4: STYLE**

#### ***Enhancing the Long Term Solution***

Style is the elaboration of the long-term problem solution which reflects the creativity and expresses originality of the solution. Every long-term problem description has a section specifying the five Style categories for that problem. **Items judged for style cannot be scored elsewhere in the long-term presentation.** This is where your "art of asking questions" will be used a great deal to get your team's best.

#### **Style...**

- Is not talent, but how the team uses its talent
- Must be related to and enhance the long-term solution
- Will "sell" the team's long-term solution
- Will be interesting to watch and understand
- Will show elaboration on basic ideas (how is a vw different than a bmw? Both have same function and get you from point A to point B but....)
- Will exhibit quality in some way- a degree of excellence

#### **Here are some coaching tips for style:**

Before beginning itemize team talents. Make sure the team is within the rules and it is appropriate. You should ask questions to point out potential problems. This is not outside assistance. For example: Team wants to create a flame by using a propane lantern...Your input would be to refer to the Program Guide under safety rules. What other way could you create a flame or affect?

- Videotape the team for them to critique themselves. Do it on an ongoing basis
- Make sure the team understands the scoring of style
- Ask the team:
  - How style is related to their long-term solution
  - What do you mean by...?
  - How would this benefit your solution?
  - Are there other possibilities?
  - How might you accomplish this?
  - What existing materials might you have that can be used in a new way?
  - What additional materials do you need?
  - How might you modify these materials to suit your needs?
  - Is there anything else that can be done?
  - Can you explain how this idea will work?
  - What would happen if you combine your idea with someone else's idea?
  - Can you extend this idea any further - what else is possible?

#### ***Basics of Costumes, Props and Scenery***

##### **Costumes**

- Are they well keyed to given time period or style?
- Are everyday materials used in different ways verses store bought fancy items?

Are they well constructed as can be expected from age level involved?  
Are they integrated with total effect?  
Is evidence of innovation and imagination in design?

**COMMON STYLE**

Street clothes – not altered  
Rented or bought costumes

**MORE CREATIVE STYLE**

Assembled clothes from Goodwill  
COLORFUL  
Unusual materials  
Made by the team  
Costumes that show what the character  
the team member is playing

**Props & Scenery**

Is setting designed to coordinate, extend and develop overall solution of problem?  
Are graphics clear, easily read, and coordinate with them?  
Are elements of setting designed to be used efficiently without breaking?  
Is setting readily established indicating careful planning?  
Are details, scene changes, & prop utilization well executed?

**PROPS**

**COMMON STYLE**

Plain cardboard  
Little color  
Few props  
Basic items

**PROPS**

**MORE CREATIVE STYLE**

3 Dimensional  
Colorful and bright if possible  
Pop-out props  
Unusual materials or use of materials  
High attention to detail – Quality counts  
Can it move?

**SCENERY**

**COMMON STYLE**

None or very plain  
Lacks color

**SCENERY**

**MORE CREATIVE STYLE**

Large if possible  
Colorful  
3-Dimensional  
Appropriate to the them

**Auditory Accompaniment** (sound effects, song, music, chants, rhythm, etc...)

Is music integrated into total solution?  
Are lyrics creative and imaginative?  
Is execution of vocal and/or instrumental music clear and easily understood?  
Does it contribute to the interaction or coordination between people, overall effect?

**COMMON STYLE**

None

**MORE CREATIVE STYLE**

Some music where appropriate  
Music throughout the performance

Songs – original or parodies  
Synchronization of performance lines  
with music  
Rhyming

### **Other Possible Style Areas**

Membership Sign  
Descriptive Prose - Story, play, narrative  
Decorations On Items - Details that make things look finished  
Make-Up & Disguises - Character creation, elaboration  
Painting - On things, on back drops, on people  
Controlled Movement - Dance, exercises, marching, coordination between team members  
Required Items - Elaboration, Personalized To Match Team Style  
Lighting/Created Equip - Things that do things  
Puppets  
Playbills

### **Scoring of Style**

#### ***Specified style areas***

Each problem will specify at least one area of style to be judged. All teams will be judged on this element(s).

#### ***Free Choice of Team***

All problems give the team one or more areas of style that are the free choice of the team to pick. Pick wisely and carefully:

The team's choice cannot be an element that is already being scored. Discuss these early and often, don't wait until night before. Be specific and describe as completely as possible. For example don't list "song" if what is special is the original lyrics. List the lyrics of the song. The judge will only score on what is specified. It is important to choose areas that clearly stand out - easily identifiable by judge. Strong points of presentation - choose areas that will have maximum impact; that will be exceptional. Remember that style is not talent but how your team uses it's talent.

#### ***Overall Effect***

This is a brief description to tell how the style presentation relates to the "long term problem solution". It describes how the required elements of style, free choice and other style elements come together to enhance the overall effect and how it relates to the long term solution. Overall effect also describes how each part of the presentation come together smoothly, clearly accurately easily heard and understood. It is the overall impression.

Some questions to consider for Overall Effect

1. Is there a repetition or enlargement of a dominant theme?
2. Can the mode of production be easily defined? – melodramatic, tragic, romantic, scientific, futuristic, historical, comical?
3. Do parts of the production work together to create a total effect?

4. Do the characters move in a defined manner in studied behavior and characterization?
5. Do the characters know where they are supposed to be at all times?
6. Are the transitions smooth?
7. Is the speech of the characters clear, accurate, easily heard, and understood?

**Elements of Style a judge will look for:**

- Opening & closing. Is that clear?
- Integration of team members, does one dominate?
- Do team members present themselves with confidence?
- Originality is innovative and unpredictable
- Smoothness of delivery & integration (practice will accomplish this)
- Cohesiveness of message and delivery
- Are concepts and points clearly emphasized
- How thoroughly is style connected to the long term problem solution
- Quality of workmanship, design, construction of costumes, props...
- Is there unity, continuity and believability?
- Did the judge understand what was going on? Will they get the point?

**“When in doubt, throw it out”**

It is important to consider the appropriateness of costumes, dialogue, props, etc. because you only have 8 minutes.

**Vehicle, Technical and Structure Teams**

Take into consideration the working or not working of specific technical elements when presenting your long term solution. What will you do if a technical element does not work? What will you do if it starts working when you don't want it to? What will you do if your structure breaks early or not at all?

Remember that style is subjective scoring and it is up to the judge for that score. Each team will be judge by the same judges with the same subjectivity.

***Beyond the Basics of Costumes, Props and Scenery***

One of the best ways for your team to improve their style is to watch performances of other teams in different divisions and in different problems. In addition, once the team has progressed through some of the problem solving of their long term, the team can begin to select their “Free Choice” style elements. While it is important to give attention to all elements of their presentation, by selecting style elements early, the team can devote extra time to elaboration, design and quality.

Some questions for your team to ask themselves are:

- Is your set up and introduction done quickly and efficiently?
- How or where could elaboration be added *that benefits your solution*?
- Can each and every voice be heard clearly?
- Has the team practiced in a variety of environments?

- Can you use make-up to improve a character?
- Does the presentation of the solution flow smoothly?
- Will the props and scenery fit through a standard door?
- Is the humor appropriate and funny to judges?
- Does the membership sign connect with the theme of the solution?
- Are the props and scenery well constructed?
- Can the sound effects, music, etc. be heard?
- Does the team's enthusiasm show?
- Are you within the 8-minute time limit?
- Have you paid attention to the details of your style elements?
- Have you talked about how to answer the judges' questions at the end of the performance?

### ***Using Recycled/Reusable Materials***

Odyssey of the Mind encourages the use of recycled and reusable materials. What a fantastic way for a team to demonstrate its creativity than putting an item that was used one way to a different use. Many of your household recyclable items and discarded equipment can be utilized as props, costumes, scenery, etc. Below is a list of items that are often used more than once by teams.

Paper Towel Rolls	Cardboard	PVC Pipe	Grocery Bags
Juice Pack Bags	Tinfoil	Water Noodles	Styrofoam
Packaging Peanuts	Dryer Motors	Cordless Drill	Bedding Sheets
Dimensional Wood	2 Liter Bottles	Batteries	Milk Jugs
Yogurt Containers	Plastic Silverware	Tin Cans	Riding Toys
Newspaper	Auto Parts	Cement Forms	Body Wash Puffs
Foam Packaging	CDs	Coffee Cans	Wire
Bicycle Parts	Large Plastic Culverts	Tires	Fabric scraps
Plastic Cups	Pop Tops	55 Gal. Plastic Drum	Dryer Vents
Pie Tins	Mini Blinds	Potato Chip Tubes	Hair Dryers
Mixers	Carpet Tubes	Bubble Wrap	License Plates
Casters	Thread Spools	Carpet Scraps	Sleds
Hula Hoops	Corrugated Cardboard	Clothing	Golf Tees
Yarn	Paper Plates	Aluminum Can Lids	Paint
		Kleenex Boxes	

### ***Completing the Style Form***

The only way the Judges know what you specifically want scored with regards to Style is the Style Form. Be very specific with whose costume, which prop, what part of the scenery, etc. and what aspects of the style element you want scored and why. For example, is it the creative use of materials – color, texture, shape? Is it the creative use of recycled materials? Is it how the dialogue rhymes, etc?

- Assume the judges *do not know anything* about your style element and the team needs to explain it all
- Start with writing a small paragraph of each style element
- Ask your team “Why?” 5 times to help them create this paragraph
- Overall effect is how the 4 Style elements work together to create a complete picture
- Name the person who created the style element so the judges know with whom talk after the presentation
- Type the Style elements using the Word version on the National Website to make sure the writing is clear

### ***WOW!-ing The Judges***

Your team wants to “Wow!” the judges, but how? The key to this is adding dramatic effect, focusing on the details, incorporating themes and capitalizing on the special talents of your team members. Encourage the team to learn to speak with their movements, expressions and stage presence rather than their voice. A good exercise is to have the team practice their presentation without saying any lines, but just focus on their physical movements, their facial expressions and place on the stage. Have the team consider some of the questions below to enhance their style

- Have you added dramatic effect to attract the attention of the judges at certain times?
- Have you removed dramatic effect to not draw attention when you want the focus of the judge to be somewhere else?
- Have the talents of the team been fully used?
- Does the “polish” of the team show?
- Have you included variety – puns, poetry, rhyme, rhythm, etc.)
- Did you allow time for humor and laughter by the judges and audience?
- Have you used unique materials for costumes, props, etc. that have texture, color, unique shape, etc?
- Do your movements on stage have dramatic effect?
- Does the action show what it is designed to do?
- Can you incorporate dancing, singing, marching, synchronization of movement?
- Do you have a unique or obvious way to end your presentation?
- Has the team video taped their performance to critique?

### ***Incorporating Themes***

Themes help connect the different parts of the presentation so the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Repetition is also another means to create a theme. Themes demonstrate the ability to be creative while establishing continuity. The key to themes is making them broad in scope rather than narrow. Narrow themes will limit the teams’ ability to incorporate creative ideas. If your team wants to use themes, conduct a brainstorming session for them. Regardless of the theme, it needs to be weaved throughout your entire presentation. Pop culture – no, your judges are not 15 years old

- Colors
- TV Shows
- Video games
- Rhyming
- Shapes
- Countries
- Parody on abbreviations
- Puppets
- Giant books
- States
- Animals
- Clay animation
- Parody on OM words
- Miming
- Musicals
- Food

### ***Special Talents of Team Members***

As a coach you may not be aware of the special talents of your team members unless you ask. Take the time to have your team complete a survey of their strengths. You can find a sample survey in the “Role of the Coach” section of this handbook. Some of the numerous talents showcased at competition include singing, engineering, miming, dancing, comedy, playing musical instruments, costume design and construction, painting and many more. When a team can utilize the strengths and talents of their team members in a risk taking environment, they are more likely to increase their creativity and self confidence.

The key for any team is to balance the talents of its team members while incorporating them appropriately into the long term solution. Some talents may have to be in the background due to not matching well with the long term problem or solution. It is up to the team to decide which talents will best communicate their long term solution to the judges.