



NCOM Eastern Region Coaches Training

New Coaches Seminar
October 25, 2025

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Regional Director (and a few other OM jobs!)



New Coaches Seminar



- What did I get myself into (what is Odyssey of the Mind)
- Creative Problem Solving – Divergent Thinking
 - Wikipedia: **Divergent thinking is a thought process or method used to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions.**
 - Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset: Harvard Business School: **Someone with a growth mindset views intelligence, abilities, and talents as learnable and capable of improvement through effort. Someone with a fixed mindset views those same traits as inherently stable and unchangeable over time.**
 - In OotM, we use very open-ended objectives in the problems. 2025-2026 Problem 1: B.6.a **The vehicle must be an original creation of the team. To be considered original, the way the vehicle travels and/or the way it is propelled must be a result of the team's ideas and work.** Scoring D.3: Creativity of the propulsion system: 4 – 20 points. Problem 5: B.10 **A surprise for the audience must be observable to the judges and audience, may take place at any time during the performance, and must be considered unexpected as portrayed in the performance at the time it is presented or performed.**





New Coaches Seminar



- What did I get myself into (what is Odyssey of the Mind)
- **Long Term Problems (200 points):**
 - Problem 1: Vehicle – Off the Rails
 - Problem 2: Technical – Lost in OMERland
 - Problem 3: Classics – The Epic Quest
 - Problem 4: Structure – Life’s a Ball!
 - Problem 5: Performance – Taller Tales of John Jivery
 - Problem 6: Primary – Clowning Around With Science
- **Style (50 points):**
 - Added element that enhances the presentation of the solution.
 - Focus is on creativity. Props, sets, costumes, decorations, song, dance:
 - 2 required elements, defined in the problem, examples from Problem 1:
 - Creativity of something worn on the Villain character’s head
 - Artistic quality of a train car
 - 2 “free choice of team”
 - Overall effect of the four Style Elements in the performance



New Coaches Seminar



- What did I get myself into (what is Odyssey of the Mind)
- **Spontaneous (100 points):**
 - Solve a problem they have never seen before until competition day
 - Teaches team members to “think on their feet.”
 - Three basic types of problems:
 - Verbal: Team members provide verbal responses. They may incorporate improvisation or dramatization. Responses are scored as “common” or “creative”.
 - Name things that are blue:
 - Common: Duke Blue Devil, Blue cheese, bluefish
 - Creative: BB King, Muddy Waters, Bluetooth Speakers, Blewett Falls Lake
 - Verbal/Hands-On: Require teams to create a tangible solution and include some type of verbal response. Teams are scored for both the tangible solution and the verbal presentation.
 - Make something with supplied materials and create a story about the solution.
 - Hands-On: Require teams to physically create a tangible solution. Each hands-on problem has its own scoring categories.



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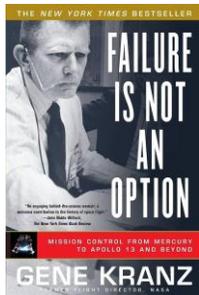


- **Coach: Job Description**

- Project manager:
 - Deliverables
 - Set a calendar
 - Assign work to team members – everyone can't work on everything
- Play to your team's strengths
- Reward good work and completion of tasks
- Facilitate brainstorming
 - Have each team member give quick ideas
 - Write down what they say
 - Discuss the ideas
 - Help them with how to decide on the best ideas

- **Odyssey of the Mind: Failure IS an Option**

- Teams are going to try things that don't work. Don't discourage them – encourage them to try again, try something else, improve on the solution.





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- **Coach: Job Description – No Outside Assistance**

- Students learn best when they complete tasks on their own, and they develop a sense of pride and increased self-esteem when they go beyond what is expected. To ensure that team members get the full benefits of participation, and to ensure fairness, team members must design and create all aspects of their problem solution.
- By far the most penalty points assessed in OotM. Anyone outside of the team giving the team solutions (ideas) or creating/building/decorating/fixing the team’s solution is outside assistance. This hurts the team – it does not help them.
- Answer questions from your team with questions.
- Help them brainstorm but let them make choices.
- Find people who can team them skills. Sewing, batteries and wiring, tools, etc. Teach them safety first! Safety items: gloves, goggles, etc. Use material that is NOT used in the team’s solution for practice.
- Steer them toward solutions that they can create without help.
 - Coach, parent, grandparent – anyone – using power tools on the team’s solution IS outside assistance. ← Outside assistance!
 - Buying lumber at the home improvement store and having the store cut the wood IS outside assistance. ← Outside assistance!
 - Help them focus on designing a solution that doesn’t need power tools to be built.
 - Some team members may be adept at using some power tools. That’s fine but help them to use them safely.
- Video them practicing their performance and help them think of ways to improve.
 - “Look for times during the performance when you have nothing to do. What could you do during that time to make your performance better?”
- Use Spontaneous verbal practice to help them with their long term solution
 - Name something we should put in an emergency repair kit for tournament day. Write down everything they say, and then make sure they put all that stuff in their emergency repair kit. ← Not outside assistance.



New Coaches Seminar



- **Coach: Job Description**

- Read the problem multiple times with the team. Each time, get into a little more detail.
- Review the Program Guide, Chapter 5, Program Rules with the team.
- Cost form:
 - Exempt items from the cost limit in the problem: Example, batteries are \$0.
 - Assigned value items: fixed cost regardless of the actual item used. Example: computer, laptop, smartphone: \$10
 - Safety items: Exempt from cost. Example: safety glasses.
 - Everything the judges see (props, sets, vehicles, costumes, etc.) needs to be included.
 - Use “yard sale” values for used items.
 - Donated items are not \$0!
- Clarifications:
 - Sometimes OotM needs to provide an update to the Long Term Problem Description
 - <https://www.odysseyofthemind.com/read-clarifications/>
 - None published so far as of 10/24/25
 - As you and your team read through the Problem Description and the Program Guide, things may still be a little fuzzy to you – what does it mean when it says _____. You can submit a private clarification and can include the team’s specific solution they are considering. OotM will provide a written response back to you. The question and answer are never shared with other teams.
 - <https://odysseyofthemind.com/member-area/>
 - Sign in, and use Submit Clarifications
 - Do NOT be afraid to submit clarifications – they help you and your team and help OotM as well. We get thousands every year – one more won’t matter. Don’t be afraid of asking a “dumb question” – no such thing!!!



New Coaches Seminar



- **Calendar, events, and costs:**

- Membership is the first step. \$290/school. You can have multiple teams – one team per problem and age division per membership.
 - Example: Charter School with K-12: could have a Primary Team, a Problem 1 Division 1 team, a Problem 3 Division 1 Team, a Problem 1 Division 2 team, and a Problem 3 Division 3 team, all with one membership.
 - If you need to have 2 teams solving the same problem in the same division, you need a 2nd membership. \$190 for the 2nd membership.
- Team registration for the regional tournament:
 - Tournament will be at Wakefield High School in Wake Forest on Saturday March 7, 2025
 - \$175 / team for P1 – P5
 - \$25 / team for Primary
 - Early Bird registration discount, \$125 / team if registered by 12/24/25
 - Final deadline for registering is 1/15/25
 - Registration is opening soon – we will email you when open. Likely in the next few days.
- Eastern Region Skills Fair
 - Saturday November 15 at Wakefield High School in Raleigh
 - We offer several classes to teach your team skills they can use in solving their problem.
 - Registration is open now - more information on the Eastern Region website: <https://ncome.org/>
 - \$12 / team member.



New Coaches Seminar



- **Calendar, events, and costs:**

- NCOM Eastern Region Office Hours: 1st Tuesday and 3rd Thursday every month, 7:00 PM, via Zoom
 - No registration needed, just grab a cup of coffee, drop in and join us. Ask questions and get help!
- Eastern Region Spontaneous Fair
 - Saturday January 24, location TBD
 - \$50/team
 - Practice spontaneous problems, feedback and suggestions on how to improve and what to work on.
 - There is no such thing as Outside Assistance with Spontaneous!
- Eastern Region Tournament
 - \$125 / team for P1 – P5 if registered by 12/24/23
 - \$25 / team for Primary
 - Saturday March 7, 2025, Wakefield High School, Wake Forest



New Coaches Seminar



- **Calendar, events, and costs:**
 - NCOM State Tournament
 - \$50 / team
 - Saturday March 28, 2026, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC
 - We will have negotiated discounted rates at hotels near the tournament
 - World Finals
 - Approximately 18,000 people from across the U.S. and from other countries
 - May 27-30, Iowa State University, Ames, IA
 - About \$675/team member – includes registration, housing, and meals
 - Be thinking about fundraising



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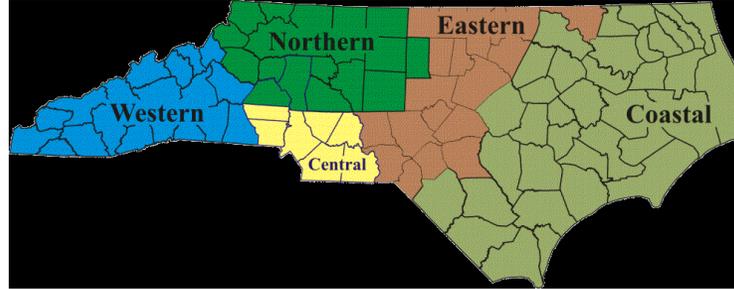


- **Tournament Day**

- Schedule will be posted a couple of weeks ahead of the tournament
- Long Term performance time, Spontaneous Performance Time, and for Problem 4, Structure Weigh In Time
- Arrive at the Spontaneous site 20 minutes ahead of scheduled time
- Arrive at the Long Term site 30 minutes ahead of scheduled time
- If you have schedule conflicts (Coach coaching 2 teams, one student on multiple teams, etc.) please let us know that via the registration process. Do NOT wait until after the schedule comes out! We always work with teams to avoid scheduling conflicts.
- Watch other teams perform – your teams can learn from that for next year!
- Awards Ceremony, High School Gym, 5:00 PM
 - Medals and Trophies
 - Information on advancing to the NCOM State Tournament
- Once your team has presented their Long Term solution, the judges will spend a few minutes with the team asking questions and having the team explain their solution to them. We ask that coaches and parents give the judges and teams some space during this time. We only want to hear from the team.
- About 30 minutes after your team performs their Long Term solution, you will receive a text message that your scores are ready. Return to the site and meet with the Head Judge. The HJ will review your Long Term and Style scores with you and answer any questions you may have.
- Be and advocate for your team. If you think there's an issue with the score, talk to the HJ. If you still have concerns, ask to speak with the Problem Captain. We will work with you – don't be afraid to ask questions!
- As part of the score review process, we cannot watch videos or look at pictures of the performance.
- We may ask to speak with your team.



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- OotM Organizational Structure
- Creative Competitions Inc., Sammy Micklus
 - <https://www.odysseyofthemind.com/>
 - North Carolina Odyssey of the Mind, Carolyn Braly
 - <http://ncom.org/>
 - Central Region: Mitzi Lynch
 - Coastal Region: Carolyn Braly
 - Northern Region: Allan Ball
 - Western Region: Pam Norton
- Eastern Region, Randy Burton
 - <https://ncome.org/>
 - <https://ncome.org/contacts/>
 - Eastern Region Wiki:
 - <https://www.ncome.org/doku/doku.php>
 - Tournament Director: Lexie Groner
 - Primary: Julie Borths
 - Problem 1: Randy Burton
 - Problem 2: Alison Blake
 - Problem 3: Diana Lisle White
 - Problem 4: Marc Blake
 - Problem 5: Tom Bojanski
 - Spontaneous: Zoe Hansen-Burnet
 - Score Room: Stephen Downhower



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