



The Coach's Role

Coaching

Each team must have at least one adult (18 years or older) registered as its head coach. Each membership has the right to determine who this person will be. The coach is generally responsible for selecting and training the team. The coach may not work on the long-term problem's solution unless, as may be the case in Division IV, he/she is also a team member. The coach selects the team, presents the problem, conducts brainstorming sessions to develop solutions to the long-term problems, conducts and evaluates spontaneous problem practice sessions, helps the team obtain the materials and knowledge necessary to solve the long-term problem, supervises practice sessions, and accompanies the team to competitions. The coach can help the team by having guest speakers visit and talk about general principles which may be useful in solving the problems, by showing films, and by providing books that also give the team basic techniques with which it may work.

Team members must design and produce their own problem solutions. They must limit their solutions to the use of materials and methods which they can handle without help. Other persons may show team members basic skills necessary to produce their solution to the problem – that is, sewing, nailing, sawing, photography, acting, etc. However, no one except the team members on the team's roster, a total of seven in one competition year, may work on the problem solution. Costumes, as well as problem solutions, may consist of ready-made pieces put together in a manner designed by the team. It is the final product which the team must design and produce, not necessarily each of its parts.

Student Eligibility and Team Selection

OotM Association welcomes and encourages all students who are capable of contributing to the solution of Odyssey of the Mind problems to participate. By allowing all students to try out for the team, more creative students can be found. However, each school administration ultimately controls team selection policies. It is the coach's responsibility to select the best students for his or her team under the guidelines set by the administration.

Methods of selecting team members vary widely among coaches. The process of selecting creative individuals may be similar to that used by coaches to select athletic teams. Potential team members may compete among themselves on problems requiring creative thinking.

- Coaches may ask teachers and school administrators to help identify students who are creative thinkers and who might enjoy the opportunity to be on an Odyssey of the Mind team. Coaches can present an awareness session to the students in an assembly and ask interested students to sign up for the program.
- Some coaches identify and select students with varying skills in order to "compose" a team. This could include an artist, a musician, a computer expert, a writer, a scientist, etc., depending on the problem. Others recruit as many students as possible, let them self-select teams and have the teams play off to determine the school's representative(s) in competition.
- Sometimes it is the students who organize the Odyssey of the Mind program within a school. In that case, the team has usually self-selected itself before a coach is chosen. Often it is the students themselves who pick the coach.

Coaches do not have to be school teachers. They may be team members' parents or other supporters. However, the team must have the support of the member school(s).

Parental Involvement

Frequently parents coach or assist the coaches. Parent coaches or assistants help foster parental interest in the school and give parents an opportunity to contribute to their child's education. Sometimes there are more students who want to participate in the Odyssey of the Mind program than a teacher coach can handle. Having parent coaches allows participation by more students.

It is helpful for coaches to call a meeting of the team members' parents to explain the Odyssey of the Mind program to them and to go over the rules for outside assistance. They can also find out what skills and facilities the parents have that teams may use. Coaches should rely on parents to be resource persons for the team. Parents can teach skills that team members need to execute their solution – carpentry, sewing, dancing, etc. They can also give general information on such subjects as engineering and scientific principles. If the team plans to enter competition, the coaches should tell parents the competition and practice schedules. The coaches also need to tell the parents what the coaches expect from them regarding transportation, money, time, etc.