

# ODYSSEY OF THE MIND

## Buccaneer Bay Region

### *Spontaneous Tips*

Spontaneous problems are an important part of the Odyssey of the Mind experience. A large portion of the final tournament score is determined during a 10 to 15-minute period in the Spontaneous problem room. Here are some suggestions to help make your team's trip through Spontaneous more fun and rewarding.

1. Practice as many Spontaneous problems as possible. The more practice the easier the time will be for the team on competition day.
2. Work on good listening skills - both to listen to other team members and to the directions. (Many teams do poorly in the competition room because they did not listen to the instructions).
3. Don't argue during a Spontaneous problem. It just wastes time & gives a poor impression to the judge(s).
4. Practice giving answers loudly and clearly. Make sure the judges understand the response. Judges are human and can misunderstand a response which means they might score it as common when it was creative.
5. Have team members take turns scoring and timing practice sessions. This helps them see and hear the difference between creative and common answers.
6. Practice brainstorming techniques:
  - A. No criticism - withhold judgment of ideas. Ideas are not evaluated during the brain storming process. A critical remark or laughter from another person stops the free flow of ideas.
  - B. Quality is desired. The larger the number of ideas, the greater the chances of reaching the best solution.
  - C. The wilder the better. Asking for far-reaching ideas encourages group members to expand and be imaginative.
  - D. Hitchhiking/Piggybacking is encouraged. Team members should be encouraged to combine or modify ideas of others. This leads to the improvement of ideas.
7. Don't assume your team will be given a verbal or non-verbal Spontaneous problem. Any long-term problem may be given any type of Spontaneous problem at the tournament
8. During *practice*, don't waste time trying to think of a creative response if the team member has a common one. Give the common response and perhaps it will stimulate other team members to give creative responses.
9. Practice teamwork skills. Many of the problems have bonus points given on how well the team works together.
10. Listen to the problem carefully. If the 'NO' word is not used, take a chance. Judges watch for risk takers when scoring creativity.
11. Try tension-relieving exercises. Many teams are very nervous before they enter the Spontaneous area. Back-rubs, shaking of arms and legs, rolling of heads, telling of simple jokes to arouse laughter, are all ways to reduce tension. A relaxed team does much better in the competition room.
12. Work on a team-uniting event such as:
  - A. A special team Spontaneous hat or uniform or,
  - B. A special song or cheer to greet the judges when they enter the problem room (not more than 15-20 seconds) or,
  - C. A special signal or activity for the team to give when they are called for their problem (not more than 10 seconds).
13. Make sure the team is aware that a copy of the problem is placed before them as it is read. They may consult it anytime while they are working on a solution to the problem.

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

# ODYSSEY OF THE MIND

## *Spontaneous Tips*

Courtesy of Bob McCall (AZOotM)

Updated by Bob Filardo (Buccaneer Bay OM)

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### **Verbal Problems**

Here are some suggested verbal Spontaneous problems that may be used for practice. Give the team members one minute to think about their answers. Then give them three minutes to answer. Afterwards allow the team members to discuss their answers and determine if more creative responses are possible.

**NOTE:** Some of the questions have suggestions in brackets for other possible ways of asking the question.

1. Suppose you have just cleaned out your closets and have a big pile of shoes that you hate to throw away. What would you do with them? (hats)
2. List something you can do with your feet that you can also do with your hands.
3. List a reason for not wearing shoes (for wearing shoes).
4. List a use of a football that is not related to sports. (Baseball, basketball)
5. List something to think about while taking a walk.
6. Give a reason why someone might come running from the woods, shivering from fright.
7. List an item you might put into your closet and give a reason why.
8. What do you do with your feet besides walk or run?
9. List things that might make your Mom or Dad happy.
10. When you go outside to catch the bus, you notice that a friend has red paint splashed all over his shoes. What explanations might you give for this?
11. You just found out that your mom is running for Mayor. What would be her campaign slogan?
12. You are a guide in the Grand Canyon. You are about to start a trip down into the canyon. List one of the supplies you should take with you and why.
13. If you organized a professional football team, what would you call it?
14. Play-Doh is a name that really describes the product. Name another product that has a very descriptive name.
15. Invent your own ice cream flavor. List the ingredients in your new ice cream.
16. List things that describe a square. (Circle, Rectangle)
17. Describe a pain in the neck.
18. List things that need horns. (Bells, whistles)
19. What might you find on the path to fame?
20. What would you fit into a 10-foot cube?
21. List things that could make this month colorful. (Substitute other months)
22. What advice would you give Christopher Columbus?
23. Name things you think should become extinct.

24. Think of an improvement you could make to your school desk.
25. What is very scary?
26. Why didn't Noah take any Gila Monsters on the Ark.
27. Hands! Hands! Hands! Think about it and you will realize that there are many different types of hands. List as many varied hands as you can.
28. Suppose you had the power to change or modify the human hand in any way you wanted. What changes would you make?
29. List things you can do while blindfolded.
30. Describe your right (left) shoe.
31. Look at an old, used-up ball-point pen and list new, unusual, clever uses you can find for it.
32. List a bumper sticker for a space shuttle.
33. List things that are slippery.
34. What would you do with a leprechaun's gold.
35. If school were a game, what would be its name?
36. For what would you like to be last in line? (First in line?)
37. Name shapes found in nature.
38. The answer is "Yes, Always." What is the question?
39. At what time would you like a clock to stop and why?
40. List something you like about school.
41. I like to dream about \_\_\_\_\_.
42. Name something you would deposit in the bank.
43. I like \_\_\_\_\_ when I take a break.
44. List things that make you say "Mmmmmmmmm."
45. Give the story of your life a title.
46. What would you like to add to your bike?
47. List a question that you would always answer "No." (Yes)
48. If you were a space traveler, name a favorite stop.
49. List things round about.
50. List something that you could see during a minute trip through your school.
51. What can be close yet distant?
52. Time seems to go faster \_\_\_\_\_?
53. List things that should last forever.
54. Name things that sparkle and glitter near midnight.
55. List things that whistle.
56. Create a school bumper sticker for a non-honor student.
57. List the most messy things.
58. Everyone should learn to \_\_\_\_\_.
59. What should never be left unplugged.
60. Name other uses for a football goal post.
61. Name things that would just fit inside a soccer ball.
62. Super school would be ....?
63. Name something unusual that you would keep in your book bag.
64. What's really funny?
65. Once is enough for what?

66. Write a bumper sticker for your hat.
67. What gives you goose pimples?
68. How far is far enough?
69. When is large little?
70. It is OK to \_\_\_\_\_?
71. What happens in a story when the bell rings?
72. Name things you like to touch.
73. List things said 1,000 times.
74. List the sounds of an April shower. (Substitute other months)
75. Describe reflections in a puddle.
76. Name things from which you need a break.
77. List unusual shapes and colors you see in your school.
78. What do you not like to wait for?
79. When could 7 and 11 be unlucky?
80. What is something a first-grade student should know?
81. List your favorite thing about May. (Substitute other months)
82. Mayday! Mayday! What could be happening?
83. Round is smarter than square because \_\_\_\_\_.
84. What seeps in?
85. Describe situations when out is in.
86. Name something that is about the size of your school.
87. List words that encourage you to try harder.
88. \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel special.
89. Name something that you hope will never change.
90. For what would you like it to be your turn?
91. If you blink you might miss \_\_\_\_\_.
92. What will shoes be like in 100 years?
93. Mini (a prefix) means small. List some unique "mini" words.
94. The answer is "Who cares." What is the question?
95. List ways to catch water from Spring rains.
96. List things that march.
97. What would you like to say to Space?
98. List some math problems a NASCAR driver might have to solve.
99. Using words with "T," describe Thursday. (Substitute letters for other days of the week.)
100. I wish I could \_\_\_\_\_ for just two minutes.
101. Name things that come in 2s. (Substitute other numbers up to 12.)
102. List some things that you do that would drive your coach crazy.
103. Name a subject you would like taught in school and tell why.
104. List gifts you would like (not) to receive.
105. List places to go on field trips.
106. For what would you trade an old bicycle, a new T-shirt and five dollars?
107. Name some absurd combinations.
108. The answer is "very, very cold." What is the question.
109. List things that overlap.

110. List things that are mean and green.
111. What should a plan for a December alien arrival include?
112. Why should snowballs be given happy faces?
113. List things that make you grin.
114. List things that are eight right or wrong.
115. List things that make you frown.
116. List things that puzzle you.
117. It takes a thousand \_\_\_\_\_ to make one \_\_\_\_\_.
118. What will not happen tomorrow?
119. What always happens tomorrow?
120. Name three things that fit inside a six-inch cube.
121. What would you like to learn that is not taught in school?
122. In what ways could you recycle your desk?
123. Make a list of useless things.
124. Describe a telephone conversation between Abe and George.
125. List things that should avoid snow.
126. Spending time with a good friend is like ....
127. What advice could President Washington give to our current president?
128. Homework is ...
129. The answer is three feet. What is the question?
130. List things that reflect friendship.
131. Ten \_\_\_\_\_ would make me very happy.
132. In what ways can time be saved.
133. Some of my favorite things are ....
134. List quiet numbers. (Loud)
135. Flying a kite is like ....
136. Make up a name for a new magazine that you would like to write for or publish.
137. Give an excellent but different April Fool's prank.
138. List things that are about four feet square. (round)
139. List things that you feel.
140. In what ways could you enjoy an April shower? (May flowers)
141. I would like to have a dozen \_\_\_\_\_.
142. List things that jump.
143. List things that count.
144. Make a wonderful wish.
145. What secret thing could you keep in a cup in a magic closet?
146. Describe the contents of a box of happiness.
147. In what ways would you like to change last week?
148. The answer is 220. What is the problem?
149. What would you do with one million bars of soap?
150. Name something blue. (Substitute other colors)
151. List things that feel soft. (Hard)
152. List things that glisten. (Are dull)
153. Mayday! Mayday! What could be happening?
154. Describe situations when out is in.

155. \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel special.
156. If you blink, you might miss ....
157. What always happens tomorrow?
158. When is what where?
159. In what ways would you improve the view from your window?
160. Homework is ....
161. Describe the sounds of a sunset.
162. List names for space aliens.
163. List things that should avoid snow.
164. What would you like to learn that is not taught in school?
165. List something useless.
166. When is never soon enough?
167. My favorite day is ....
168. Name sounds that warm you.
169. Make a bumper sticker for Santa's sleigh.
170. What makes you run?
171. Describe Sam's new school.
172. Describe a Post Office in the Year 3000.
173. What's really funny?
174. Write a bumper sticker for your cap.
175. When is large little?
176. List things that march.
177. It is not OK to ....
178. Name thing that you (not) like to touch.
179. What's "Wow"?
180. List a business you might start based on jelly beans.
181. If you found a box full of time, how would you use it.
182. List things that don't work.
183. Name something round.
184. Think of a new name for your school.
185. What might be the title of a cowboy's song to his horse?
186. About 500 miles is the answer to what question?
187. You are stranded in an airport due to bad weather. List something you could do to pass the time.
188. List things that overlap.
189. List things that make you grin.
190. List things that puzzle you.
191. This is the season for ...
192. List things that need horns.
193. List things that should never be made smaller (larger).
194. List a feeling you have when you hear a bell.
195. What would you like to see, even if only for a second?
196. Design a bumper sticker that would describe you on the way to school.
197. If time could be saved, in what would you keep it?
198. List reasons for late homework.

199. List things and places most likely to be haunted.
200. Name things that you would deposit in a time bank.
201. List things that appear wet but are dry. (dry but are wet)
202. Hands are everywhere. Name as many different kinds of hands as you can.
203. List something that reflects friendship.
204. Ten \_\_\_\_\_ would make me very happy.
205. In what ways can time be saved?
206. List quiet numbers.
207. Flying a kite is like ...
208. List foolish things.
209. List things that are about four feet square.
210. List things that you feel.
211. I would like to have a dozen \_\_\_\_\_.
212. List something that jumps.
213. List something that is sticky.
214. I have learned that....
215. What would you like to have five of?
216. What is your best excuse?
217. What would you grow in an imaginary garden?
218. Who pollutes?
219. What pollutes?
220. Why Pollute?
221. What does sunlight (water, air, earth) make you think of?
222. The emotion joy looks like ...
223. The emotion anger looks like ...

## **Verbal Hands-On**

Verbal Hands-On Spontaneous problems involve the team members using one or more objects when giving a response. Following are practice Verbal Hands-On Spontaneous problems. A list of materials needed is given before each problem. Usual timing for these problems is one minute to think and two or three minutes to respond. Coaches may add additional items to those suggested in the following problems. If you are scoring, give one point for a common answer and 5 to 7 points for a creative answer.

### ***I. Create***

12" piece of string	12" square of	Balloon
2 pencils	aluminum foil	Tennis ball
3 drinking straws	24" piece of yarn	Toothbrush
6 toothpicks	Ruler or yardstick	Coin
Coffee filter	Napkin (paper or cloth)	Plastic bag
Meat baster	2 rubber bands	Hat
6 paper clips	Business-size envelope	Surgical mask
1 paper towel	6 Marshmallows	Clothes pin
2 marbles	Sheet of paper	Eraser
Paper cup	3 cotton balls	
Paper plate	Plastic spoon	

From the above list, or by adding other items of the coach's own choice, the coach will select the number of items requested in the following questions. The items will be placed before the first team member who will then respond (and demonstrate if the question requires such action). The items are then given to the next team member to respond. Continue around the team until time runs out. After time ends, discuss the team's answers to determine if more creative responses could have been given.

1. As a prize for a contest you have a choice of one of the three items before you. You choose \_\_\_\_\_ because you say you can do the most with it. Explain your choice.
2. The three items have come to life! Describe the personality of each of these now-living characters.
3. Show how each of the three items could be improved upon to make a better product.
4. Use the three items to produce something that could be of value in the future.
5. A jewel thief has stolen a world famous gem from a museum. He used the three items to help him. How?
6. Your items are three clues uncovered from a previously unknown civilization. Describe their way of life and how those objects may have been used.
7. Use the one item to produce a musical instrument. How will it work? What kind of sound will it make?
8. You are about to blast off to another planet. You may take only one of the three items with you. Which one will it be? Why?
9. Aha! Mrs. Pansy's potted petunias have disappeared from her window boxes. The three items are the only clues to their disappearance. Explain.



10. Use all three items to design a new product useful around the house.
11. All three items belong to a person engaged in an unusual occupation. Describe it.
12. You are trapped in a cave with only the three items. One (or all of them) will help you escape. How?
13. Use the three items to create a new game or toy. Name it.

## **II. Foiled**

This problem has two parts.

- Allow 4 minutes for Part 1 and 3 minutes for Part 2. Give each team member a piece of aluminum foil about 15 inches long. Each team member will shape the foil into one or more things. The team member will place the item on a table and describe it.
- In Part 2, the team members will respond in order to make a statement about one of the solutions. The team will continue to respond about each of the solutions until time runs out.

## **III. Statue**

This problem has two parts.

- Allow four minutes during Part 1 and three minutes for Part 2. Give each team member eight straws to construct a sculpture. When time for Part 1 ends, each team member is to describe their sculpture.
- In Part 2, each team member is to describe one of the other four sculptures. The team member may select which sculpture he/she wants to describe. The team member may describe the same sculpture each time his/her turn occurs, or select a different one. SWAB Give a team member two cotton swabs. Give uses or pretend they are something. Pass the swabs from one team member to another as they give their responses.

## **IV. Noise**

Using only your fingers, make a different noise and explain what the sound represents.

## **V. Hot Chocolate**

Place a cup before a team member. The team member is to answer the following question and then pass the cup to the next team member.

**The question:** "My cup of chocolate is too hot, I would cool it off by \_\_\_\_\_."

**VI. Uses**

Plastic spoon	Scissors	3 cotton balls
Meat baster	Colored paper	Band-Aid
Broom	Envelope	Fly swatter
Stick of gum	Toy	Pancake turner
Napkin	Cookie	Ruler or yardstick
Piece of masking tape	Plastic fork	Piece of paper
Golf ball	Cup	Apron
Paper plate	Pencil	Ball-point pen
Surgical mask	File folder	Piece of string
Book bag	Small box	Small picture frame
Book Glass jar	2 paper clips	Whistle
Paper sack	Rubber band	
Bar of soap	Watch	

Using any two of the above, have the team member describe (and demonstrate) uses for one or both of the items.

**VII. Like**

Place several Lima Beans or other vegetables or fruits (photographs may be used in place of the actual fruit or vegetable) before a team member. After giving a response, the team member passes the item to the next member. The team member is the answer the question: I (do not) like (name of fruit or vegetable) because.... (Have the team gives answers one time about liking the fruit or vegetable and later about disliking it.)

## **HANDS-ON**

Hands-On Spontaneous problems require the team members to use various items to create a final solution. Following are several practice Hands-On Spontaneous problems. A list of materials needed is given before each problem. A scoring system is also given. Where teamwork is scored, the non-performing team members can be the scorekeepers. Materials may be substituted if necessary. Coaches may also modify the requirements to add additional elements to the problems.

### **I. Bridge**

#### **Materials:**

2 plastic cups	20 miniature	Four golf balls
6 plastic drinking	marshmallows	6" masking tape
straws	20 toothpicks	

**Time:** 5 minutes **Problem:** Build a bridge that will support weights Place the two plastic cups on a table 12 inches apart. Create a bridge, the ends of which are placed on the two plastic cups, that will support at least one or more golf balls. To test the bridge after time runs out, place one golf ball at a time on the bridge.

#### **Scoring:**

- 1 golf ball 10 points
- 2 golf balls 25 points
- 3 golf balls 50 points
- 4 golf balls 100 points
- Creativity of bridge: 1 - 10 points Teamwork: 1 - 10 points

### **II. Tower**

#### **Materials:**

5 drinking straws	20 toothpicks
20 marshmallows	4 computer labels

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Problem:** Build a tall tower. Build a tower as tall as possible. The team may stop at any time to have the tower judged.

#### **Scoring:**

- 2 points for each half-inch in height.
- Fractions of a half-inch are to be counted as the next tallest half-inch.
- 1 - 15 points for teamwork.
- 1 - 20 points for creativity.

### III. Car

**Materials:**

Paper milk carton	20 miniature	5 computer labels
Large deflated balloon	marshmallows	4 large round cookies
20 pieces of spaghetti	20 toothpicks	

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Problem:** Build a car. Build a car that will travel at least five feet.

**Scoring:**

- 25 points if the car travels at least one foot.
- 2 points for each inch traveled past five feet.
- 1 - 25 points for creativity.
- 1 - 25 points for teamwork.

### IV. Egg

**Materials:**

Uncooked egg	2 rubber bands	Small dish sponge
Plastic sandwich bag	1-inch square	Business-size envelope
3-inch cardboard	modeling clay	2 rubber bands
square	2 computer labels	

**Time:** 4 minutes

**Problem:** Protect an egg Design a protection system for the egg. When completed, put the protected egg into the plastic sandwich bag. Then roll the egg underhanded at least six feet across the floor against the wall.

**Scoring:**

- 50 points if the egg is not damaged in any way.
- 25 points if the egg has a small crack.
- 10 points if the egg is broken but the contents have not leaked out.
- No points if the egg is smashed, but score points for teamwork and creativity.
- 1-15 points on teamwork.
- 1-15 points on creativity.

## V. Airplane

### Materials:

5 Sheets of paper  
5 paper clips

Crayons or Markers  
Scissors

Time: 3 minutes

Problem: Fly an airplane Give each team member one piece of paper and one paper clip. Each team member is to make a paper airplane that will fly at least 15 feet and will make at least two complete spirals (plane rolls over 360 degrees twice) while flying that distance.

### Scoring:

- 20 points for each airplane that flies at least 15 feet.
- 5 points for each foot flown past 15 feet.
- 5 points if plane spirals more that two times.
- 20 points for the creativity of each airplane.

## VI. Party

### Materials:

Ice Cream - Coach's choice  
Bowls Spoons

Toppings - Coach's choice  
Cookies - Coach's choice

Drinks - Coach's choice  
Napkins

Time: 2 minutes

Problem: Have fun at your party Design an ice cream sundae that represents a holiday. Have fun eating the sundae creation.

### Scoring:

- 1-20 points for the creativity of each sundae.
- 1-50 points on how well the team works together cleaning up afterward.

## VII. Roll-Under

### Materials:

20 pieces of spaghetti  
20 miniature marshmallows

4 computer labels  
20 toothpicks  
5 golf balls

Tennis ball  
Plastic cup

Time: 6 minutes

Problem: Build a tower that will support weights Build a tower that will support one or more golf balls. The tower must be tall enough to allow the tennis ball to roll freely underneath while it supports the golf balls.

### Scoring:

- 25 points for completing the tower.
- 5 points for each golf ball supported.
- 1 - 25 points for the creativity of the tower.
- 1 - 25 points for teamwork.

### **VIII. Boat**

#### **Materials:**

Sheet paper 8 1/2 x  
11"

6 inches masking tape  
4 golf balls

8 x 14 inch cake pan  
Water

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Problem:** Build a boat that will float Create a boat that will support the weight of the golf balls. Place the golf balls in the boat one at a time. Wait three seconds between placement of each ball.

#### **Scoring:**

- 1 golf ball 25 points
- 2 golf balls 40 points
- 3 golf balls 60 points
- 4 golf balls 80 points
- 1 - 25 points for creativity of the boat
- 1 - 25 points for teamwork

### **IX. Structure**

#### **Materials:**

25 Toothpicks

25 miniature  
marshmallows

Plastic cup  
4 golf balls Ruler

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Problem:** Build a structure that will support golf balls Build a structure that will support the plastic cup. The structure must be 5 inches high at the bottom of the cup. Use the ruler to measure the height of the structure only, it cannot be used as part of the solution. After the measurement, place the golf balls into the cup one at a time. Wait three seconds after placing a ball before putting the next one into the cup.

#### **Scoring:**

- 25 points if the structure is at least 5 inches high
- 5 points for each additional half inch in height
- 15 points for each golf ball supported by the structure
- 1 - 25 points for the creativity of the structure
- 1 - 25 points for teamwork

[Preceding tips courtesy of Bob McCall, AZ Odyssey of the Mind](#)

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## Buccaneer Bay Region

### *Spontaneous Tips*

Courtesy of Bob Filardo

1. Before entering the spontaneous room, know which team members will compete in each type of problem.

2. **LISTEN CAREFULLY TO THE JUDGE READING THE PROBLEM.**

Refer to the team's copy of the problem often, and be sure to stay within the problem's intent. If there is uncertainty about an aspect of the problem, ask the judges questions. Time will not be stopped, but a misunderstanding or wrong assumption can lead to a low score.

3. In verbal spontaneous, speak loudly and clearly. If a problem limits the number of responses, it is best to take time to think of something creative and earn more points, rather than to rattle off many 1 point responses.

4. Remember to keep the problem a secret once you leave the spontaneous competition room. You may not discuss it until a tournament official allows it at the end of the tournament day. Anyone who reveals a spontaneous problem is subject to disqualification and/or disciplinary action taken against the entire team.

5. Some techniques for success:

- No watches or electronic devices are allowed in the Spontaneous room.
- Assign roles for team members (especially for hands-on); timer (responsible for keeping track of time).
- Listen to problem as the judge reads it to you.
- Review the team's copy of the problem to be sure you know what is expected.
- Notice what you are judged on; where are the points coming from?
- Use the provided materials effectively; you don't HAVE to use them all unless the problem says you do!
- Focus on quality answers...they receive the most points.
- Work as a team! Show the judges what a great team you are.
- Answer with enthusiasm: sing, emote, smile, laugh! Remember to be excited about the problem!
- Know who your judges are ...Give answers they will understand.
- Instructed NOT to discuss the problem outside of the room (not even with coaches!!).
- Try to relax and have fun with the problem!