

STYLE

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# ... Get the Picture?

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# WHAT IS STYLE

(or, how is a Ferrari different from a Rabbit? They both get you there, but...)

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## #1. What is Odyssey of the Mind “Style”?

Style may be defined as “that which adds to the solution of the problem and relates to the nature of the problem or the solution BUT is not required to solve the problem.” Style is the elaboration or enhancement of the problem solution, the sales presentation, the packaging of the product.

Odyssey of the Mind is made up of three scoring categories and the aggregate score determines a team’s rank in competition.:

- The Long-Term Problem solution can score a maximum of 200 points.
- The Spontaneous Problem can earn a maximum of 100 points.
- The Style presentation can earn a maximum of 50 points.

A winning Style will be the one that has a “unique” presentation. The final total package, with the emphasis on those special touches, will be the one that enhances, attracts and adds pizzazz to the Long-Term solution/presentation. It is a combination of many things: music, lights, laughter and has that special “zing”. Style is one that is well prepared, well-rehearsed, and pleasing to the overall Spirit of OM. In essence, it is a successful stage production that should be fun for the team.

## #2. Four Basic Components to Creating Winning “Style”

- SELECTION: Choose a style that the judges (and the audience) can identify with, be it a song, certain characters or a fad.
- UNITY: try to fit all parts of the performance into the style theme – scenery, membership sign, long-term solution and costumes.
- BELIEVABILITY: Have all performers who are in sight either acting or reacting. Stay “in character”. Never have anyone just standing and watching.

## #3. Coaching Strategies for “Style”

- Solve the Long-Term portion of the problem first, then decide on an appropriate theme for your Style. In this way, you can incorporate as many aspects of your Long-Term solution into the Style presentation as possible.
- The highest scoring Style presentations always evoke some sort of emotional response from the judges, and team should be directed to work toward this goal.
- Remember who your audience is, THE JUDGES! Themes that might be considered funny or serious by students in an age group might not evoke the same response from judges who tend to be older.
- Have the team thoroughly read the GENERAL RULES for Style presentation. Cover, in-depth, these rules until all team members have the feel for Style.
- Urge the team to brainstorm ways of presenting and implementing the chosen theme. Consider costumes, music, dialogue, acting, dancing, comedy and mime. Have team members identify individual strengths. Consider these strengths when creating Style.

- Assign script writers to the task of developing a rough draft copy which is to be brought to the next team practice. All team members critique the rough draft – add, delete, change – until a final script meets the approval of all team members.
- Allow ample time for team members to practice various roles created for their Style presentation. At the next practice, team members may try out for Style parts.
- Videotape Style practice session so students can see themselves as others see them. Team members should critique their performances.
- Practice Style in front of different groups such as teachers, peers, etc. This tends to build confidence, reduce tension and helps the team gauge the audience reaction.

#### #4. Appropriate Questions Coaches May Ask of the Team to Help Clarify Ideas

- Do you have a script to practice with?
- Have you thought about using music?
- What kinds of costumes will you have?
- Have you thought about using scenery or props?
- What kind of makeup will you use?
- Can you include (more) humor?
- Did you remember that presentation should be visual as well as verbal (or vice versa)?
- Can you include rhyme?
- Could you include dance as part of Style?
- How else might you elaborate on the Long-Term problem solution?
- Do you have your Style form completed?
- Are there any aspects of your style which are part of the Long-Term problem solution?
- What else could you do to the visual presentation of the Long-Term problem to make it more interesting? More Colorful? More Unusual? More realistic?

#### #5. “Free Choice of the Team” Criteria Selection

A few suggestions for “Free Choice” judging categories are:

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| - Costumes                        | - Narration of action  |
| - Scenery                         | - Acting ability (stage presence, etc.)                            |
| - Dance                           | - Appearance of character of choice                                |
| - Skit                            | - Songs (originals or parodies)                                    |
| - Playbill                        | - Introduction of characters                                       |
| - Foreign accents                 | - Special effects (lights, media, sound)                           |
| - Mime                            | - Original poetry, choral reading – puppets (integrated into skit) |
| - Use of color                    | - Integration and/or synchronization of music (live or recorded)   |
| - Membership sign (theme related) |  |
| - Props (quality and use of)      |  |

Judges are impressed by such things as:

- The quality of the performance.
- The uniqueness of the ideas.
- The actualization and execution of ideas.

# HELPFUL HINTS REGARDING ODYSSEY OF THE MIND

## “STYLE” COMPETITION

### Successful Style Will:

- Be interesting to watch and understand.
- Excite the senses in many ways.
- Entertain the judges (and audience).
- Demonstrate pizzazz.
- Show elaboration on basic ideas.

### How to Elicit Good Style, or Questions Coaches Might Ask Their Teams

- How is this related to your long-term problem?
- What do you mean by...?
- How would this benefit your solution?
- Are there other possibilities?
- How might you accomplish this?
- What existing materials or items might you have that can be used in a new way?
- What additional materials will 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?

### Coaching Tips for Successful Style

- Before beginning style, itemize team talents – use what you have...
- Attract attention with dramatic elements.
- Use repetition to get the theme or point across.
- Label characters in some way if necessary for clarity.
- Make sure the judge (and audience) understands your theme, or “gets the point”.
- Use common sense on appropriateness of outfits and language.
- “When in doubt, throw it out”.
- It is the coaches’ responsibility to make sure the team is within the rules, and appropriate. You should point out potential problems to your team. This is NOT outside assistance.
- Videotape for team critiques. Do this on an ongoing basis so the team can see their progress.
- Make contingency plans – Murphy’s Law DOES exist in OM.
- Make and bring your TOOL BOX.
- Arrange for your team to practice in a simulated competition area (stage, etc.).
- Require your team to have their style presentation totally ready at least one week before the tournament to allow time for fine tuning.
- Practice timing and practice some more!

- Allow extra time for style in the presentation (example: plan on using only seven of the eight minutes allowed).
- A popular backdrop material is “house wrap” or Tyvek or Typar. It is lightweight, paintable and sturdy.
- Remember that style judging is SUBJECTIVE and that the judges are doing the best they can.
- Finally, remember this is supposed to be FUN!

## FILLING OUT THAT STYLE FORM

### Specified Style Area

*Most problems specify two areas of style to be judges. Look up what is required by your problem and write or type that directly on the style form in the appropriate area.*

### Free Choice of Team

*All problems give the team two areas of Style that are the FREE CHOICE of the team to pick. Pick wisely and carefully.*

- Discuss this early and often, don’t wait until the night before tournament.
- Be SPECIFIC and describe as completely as possible.
- Remember a judge can only score on what is specified.
- Choose areas that clearly stand out.
  - Easily identifiable by judge.
  - Strong points of presentation.
- Choose areas that will have maximum impact when compared to other teams (example: membership sign. Since all teams are required to have one, make sure yours is exceptional).
- Remember that style is not talent, but how your team uses its talents.

### Overall Effect

- It is the general impression of the judges.
- Includes smoothness of deliver – this can be improved by practice.
- Includes the cohesiveness of message and delivery.
- Did the judge understand what was going on? Did they get your message?

### Describe Overall Effect

*This is a brief description to “tell how the style presentation relates to the long-term problem solution”. This used to be called the “synopsis”, but note they are not asking for a synopsis of the action any longer, but a description of “how” the action relates to the problem solution.*

- Be succinct. This description will be read aloud at the start of your performance at the Regional and State levels, but not at the World level.
- Make sure your concepts are clearly described.
- Emphasize your free choice areas in the description.
- Tom make up the form itself, ty the cut, paste and photocopy method of attaching your description paragraph(s) as they “evolve”.

## Elements of Style A Judge Looks For

- Opening and close, is there a clear beginning and ending to the presentation?
- Integration of team members, does one dominate?
- Do team members present themselves with confidence?
- Originality, is it innovative and unpredictable?
- Are style elements smoothly integrated throughout?
- Is style interesting and cohesive? Or are bits of action just strung together?
- Are concepts and points clearly emphasized?
- How thoroughly is style connected to the long-term problem solution?
- Does the style evoke emotion, does it make the judge think, laugh, cry?
- What is the quality of design, construction and workmanship of costumes and props?
- Is there unity, continuity and believability?
- Does the judge “get the point”?

## DEVELOPING STYLE

### Things To Think About

Remember...Style enhances the problem presentation/solution. It is what “sells” the product.

- Study the style scoring categories in the General Rules portion of the current year’s Program Guide.
- Pay attention to the fact that items to be judged for style cannot be scored elsewhere in the long-term presentation.
- In the “Free Choice” category, be specific about precisely what you want the judges to score. For example, don’t list “costumes” if one costume is spectacular and the others are not.
- Don’t list “song” if what is special is the original lyrics of the song.
- Inventory the students’ talents to determine what skills and talents each can offer.
  - Perhaps one can dance, another might play a musical instrument, or a third might be good at writing. Utilize the talents to your team’s advantage.
- It is good to select a theme and weave it throughout all aspects of the solution/presentation.
- Consider the opening and closing, unity and continuity, pizzazz (how do the characters come across?) and originality.
- Choose a style that the judge can identify with. Remember the judges award the points and need to be able to understand the team’s message.

### Questions to Help Guide Your Team in Developing Style

#### Costumes

1. Are costumes keyed to given time period or style?
2. Are everyday materials used in different ways versus store bought fancy items?
3. Are costumes as well constructed as can be expected from age level involved?
4. Do costumes integrate with total effect?
5. Is there evidence of innovation and imagination in design?

## Music

1. Is music integrated into total solution/presentation?
2. Are lyrics creative and imaginative?
3. Was execution of vocal and/or instrumental music clear and easily understood?
4. Did it contribute to overall effect?

## Background Scenery/Props

1. Is setting designed to coordinate, extend, and develop overall solution of the problem?
2. Are graphics clear, easily read, and coordinated with theme?
3. Are elements of setting designed to be used efficiently without breaking?
4. Is setting readily established, indicating careful planning?
5. Are details, scene changes, and prop utilization well executed?

## Overall Effect

1. Is there repetition or enlargement of dominant theme?
2. Can mode of production be defined (melodramatic, tragic, romantic, scientific, futuristic, historical, comical, etc.)?
3. Do parts of production function to produce total effect?
4. Do participants move in defined manner indicating studied behavior and characterization? Do they know where they are supposed to be at all times?
5. Are transition parts smooth?

## Other Possible Style Areas (\*)

- Painting (things, people, backdrops)
- Costumes (emotional impact)
- Auditory Accompaniment (song, music, rhyme, sound effects, poems, chants, rhyme)
- Patterned or Controlled movement (dance, exercise, marching)
- Descriptive Prose (Story, play, narrative)
- Lighting
- Props
- Scenery
- Decorations
- Make-up (remember that only team members can apply to each other...no one else)
- "Details" on the Required Things
- Coordination Between People
- ETC., ETC., ETC...

(\*) Except when scored as part of the Long-Term problem solution/presentation.

**REMEMBER:  
THE LONG-TERM IS THE HOW,  
BUT STYLE IS THE WOW!**