

STYLE OVERVIEW

(by Lisa Love)

WHAT'S THAT?

- It is what everyone displays every day
- It is what every team has from the first time it meets
- It is the way a person (or group) talks, walks, dresses, thinks ...in general presents themselves

SO WHY IS IT SCORED?

- It is a team's **STYLE** that makes its problem solution unique
- It is a team's **STYLE** that demonstrates its creative thinking outside the problem constraints
- It is a team's **STYLE** that ties all the elements of a problem solution together

WHAT, EXACTLY, IS SCORED?

- Each long-term problem has 1- 2 mandatory and 2-3 "free choice of team" elements
- Each long-term problem has an "overall effect" element – how well the first 4 fit together and enhance the long-term solution
- Each category is valued at 10 points, for a possible "perfect score" of 50 Style Points
- Each team is scaled relative to the top team, whose raw score is scaled to 50

WHAT IS NOT SCORED?

- Nothing scored in the long-term problem (under "Scoring") may be chosen for Style score.

WHO SCORES STYLE?

- **Style** judges are two or three specially trained officials who receive the Style Forms for each team and score all Style categories
- **Style** judges score independent of each other and independent of the problem judges
- **Style** judges score only the Style elements

WHAT IS A STYLE FORM?

- The form is a sheet found in the appendix of the Program Guide
- The form is completed by the team and duplicated to provide 2-3 copies (as required by your tournament director)
- The form must be filled out by the team (or, in Div. 1, may be dictated to the coach to write)
- The forms (2-3 copies) are given to the Staging Area Judge to give to the Style Judges before the team's performance
- The forms become the judges' score sheets (so you won't get them back)
- The forms tell the judges exactly what the team wants scored
- The forms tell the judges how the elements combine for "overall effect" (in the paragraph)

HOW DOES A TEAM SELECT STYLE ELEMENTS?

- Some teams choose the elements at the very beginning of their journey and plan them carefully
- Some teams identify and choose the elements in the middle, after they've begun working
- Some teams identify the elements – especially “free choice” – after they are almost done (and they have a number of items from which to choose)

STYLE - GENERAL STRATEGIES

Each team approaches **Style** somewhat differently ... according to their problem-solving **STYLE!**

There is no right or wrong method, although there are some approaches that work well for most teams. Some of the useful basic strategies might include:

Advance planning and brainstorming

A team that combines long-term problem discussion and brainstorming with Style brainstorming may find it easier to integrate all the elements. This may be the result of taking one good idea and letting others flow from it. (For example, with “Shrinking Structure” many teams brainstormed things that shrink and this led to a number of interesting Style themes.) Brainstorming long-term and Style together often leads to a more detailed, sophisticated solution.

While a coach may not suggest ideas to a team, he or she may certainly suggest (strongly, even) that the team discuss questions such as the following:

- What parts of the problem solution might the team treat as a verbal spontaneous problem in order to make a list of creative ideas? (Let the team choose phrases/ideas/words to brainstorm and have a team member write down the creative answers he or she hears. Division 1 coaches may write for the team, but the team's own words, please, to avoid Outside Assistance!)
 - EXAMPLE: A spontaneous problem for the vehicle problem might be “Name everything that travels!”
- What could the team do that would be unique or unusual? (Let the team get wild and crazy with their ideas ... one idea, even an unworkable one, leads to others!)
 - EXAMPLE: A team might decide that we can't pull a rabbit out of a hat (live animals are not allowed). But could there be some other surprising thing that we might be able to do? What are the elements of magic?
- What are all possible meanings/examples of _____? (Fill in the blank with words or phrases from the long-term problem or from team lists or discussions.)
 - EXAMPLE: A team studying *The Old Man and the Sea* might ask themselves, “What are all the meanings/examples of conquer?”
- Who will your audience be? (Would anything hurt someone's feelings, be offensive, or not be understood by adults? (Remember, coaches, teams must answer these questions themselves, and you must allow them their choices, whether you agree or disagree).

Analysis of strengths

Every team has a different chemistry, and a different compilation of talent. Working together as a team should be one of the major goals of the group. Identifying different abilities may help to determine where the team wishes to put their time. Does someone have artistic talent? Gymnastic talent? Choreography experience? Interest in magic tricks? Knowledge about Irish history? Identifying team members' interests and talents may spark discussion of unusual approaches – and a team's unique **STYLE!** (Remember that talent alone is not a goal. Judges reward creativity above all else, but talent may be combined with a novel idea to produce a creative element or solution).

STYLE (and long-term) - SPECIFIC TACTICS

OVERALL, TEAMS NEED TO:

- Make connections in unusual and creative ways. Practice this with spontaneous
- Choose a motif/theme/mood for the problem solution and try to keep this as a basis for all parts of the solution.
- Read the problem and the rules. Then read them again. Then brainstorm awhile and then read them again.
 - *Do you know:* what you can use that is exempt from the materials value form? What materials are not allowed? What audio-visual equipment you may use? What all the limitations of the problem are? What the creative emphasis of the problem is?
- Be sure all Style elements can be seen or heard during the 8 minute presentation. Style judges will examine Style elements more closely during the time they talk to the team afterwards, but there is only on first impression!
- Remember that old axiom: "Good, better, best; don't let it rest, 'til your good is your better and your better is your best." "Pretty good" may also be "pretty mediocre." Teams should not aim for perfection – that will lead to only frustration! – but *should* aim for their very best, or at least their VERY good! *Odyssey of the Mind™* is about stretching your imaginations, your abilities, and your goals, to surpass even what you first thought you could do!
- Consider as many possible Style categories as they can dream up, including, but not limited to: team sign, artwork, props, costumes, script, poems, dance, music, movement, mime, lighting ... the list is almost limitless! Write them all down and then brainstorm the ones the team likes best. How can we ... modify it? Enlarge it? Turn it upside down? Reverse it? Substitute another method or material?
- Be as specific as possible on the Style Form. Identify the exact portion of an element which the team wants scored, and be sure the paragraph at the bottom explains how everything relates to a theme or effect. Use that paragraph to elaborate on individual elements.

- Have FUN with the Style elements! The team is going to live with these creations for some while, and if they don't like them/don't want to work on them, then regardless of score, this will not be a great Odyssey year! A team should really like its ideas and be enthusiastic about seeing them come to fruition. If interest is lagging, they might be better off going back to the drawing board!
- **On the other hand, never allow failure to put an end to a good idea if the team really likes it. They should find another way to implement it, another connection to transform it, or another perspective from which to view it. This is how ideas go from good to great!**

In other words ... Plan carefully, but think **crazily**,
Mind the **RULES**, but push the envelope,
Work hard, but have **FUN!**