



Quick Tips for Coaches

Coaching Odyssey of the Mind teams is a fun and rewarding experience, although at first it may seem intimidating. Below are a few tips that will help new or experienced coaches get started for the program year. Your first step is complete — getting the Odyssey of the Mind membership materials for 2015-16. Here is a checklist for things to do in order to get started. Get ready for another exciting, creativity-filled program year!

- ✓ **Read** the entire *2015-16 Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide*. Even if you've read the guide before, read it again this year. It's revised every year, with rules updated, and new rules and information added. Refer to it often throughout the year. It has the answer to most questions. This could make a big difference for teams.
- ✓ **Seek out** students to coach! Get them interested and involved. Show enthusiasm. Announce your school's participation, hang posters, and ask teachers to recommend students to participate.
- ✓ **Invite** everyone who's interested to attend a meeting where you will present the long-term problems. Ask students to sign up for the problem that interests them and form teams from the lists. Give each team a copy of its chosen problem and ask the team members to read it. Let them know they are making a commitment to a team activity.
- ✓ **Find** at least one coach for each team. Ask teachers and parents to help. A co-coach or assistant coach can help share responsibilities.
- ✓ **Set** basic rules and decide on a practice schedule. Stress the importance of attending meetings and practice sessions. Set down rules for good sportsmanship and constructive criticism. Direct individuals or small groups to work on their own between practices.
- ✓ **Encourage** cooperation. Teamwork is one of the basic principles of Odyssey of the Mind. All teams go through growing pains, but members will learn to work together in time. Everyone's idea is important to the group.
- ✓ **Be sure** the team solves the problem on its own. A coach should help team members develop creative problem-solving skills, **not help solve the problem**. Before giving any input, ask yourself if it would add to or improve the team's solution (outside assistance), or if it would teach better problem-solving skills (good coaching).
- ✓ **Learn** about the Spontaneous portion of the program and practice it at every team meeting. Books of practice problems are available at odysseyofthemind.com/shop/.
- ✓ **Find** the contact information for your local Tournament Director. This person will be able to provide information about local Coaches Training Workshops, and tournament dates and locations. Information can be found by choosing the **Contacts** link at www.odysseyofthemind.com. If there is no director for your state or country, contact CCI.
- ✓ **Explore the Member Area** of the Odyssey web site. After logging in you can access copies of all the problems, all other parts of this packet, as well as many other helpful tools. You can also download copies of your membership status in the member area. You will need this at your local tournament.
- ✓ **Stay up-to-date** on problem clarifications, which supercede the rules in the problems. You can do this by checking odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications/ on a regular basis.
- ✓ **Suggest** submitting a problem clarification if your team is unsure of an aspect of its solution. Be sure to re-read the program guide to avoid unnecessary questions. Cut-off for submitting questions is February 15, 2016.
- ✓ **Copy and distribute** materials to all teams within your membership if you are listed as the contact. If not, check in regularly with the person who is listed as the contact, since that person will receive any information mailed from CCI throughout the year.