

COACHING TIPS

- Keep time management as a coaching priority. Make teams stick to schedules; encourage them to estimate how long things will take.
- The coach must be the rock, the motivator, the resolver of social conflicts.
- Learn to recognize *burnout*, and when to lighten up. Over the long season, morale and fun will be important.
- Make a commitment to the team. Ask your team members to make a commitment to each other.
- Learn how to ask questions that invite creativity without inserting your own notions. Become an expert at this skill.
- Be a real resource person. Teach your team how to acquire the skills they want, and put them in touch with the resources that can help them do that.
- Remember that the difference between good solutions and excellent ones is in the details and embellishments.
- Practice spontaneous as much as you work on long term and style.
- Teach contingency planning. Encourage your team to think about backup materials, tool kits, and how to recover from unexpected problems.
- Practice mistakes -- accidents often happen, but good teams recover.
- Plan on disappointments and disagreements. Decide early how you and the team will handle them.
- Help your team to know the long term problem and the Program Guide inside out and backward. Try a trivia contest, with prizes for rules knowledge.
- Solve the social problems before they try to solve the Odyssey problems.
- Have the team set goals. Write them down and place them in clear view. Coach them on what kinds of goals are helpful.
- Be ready to be psychologist, parent, doctor, lawyer, referee, friend, co-conspirator, or counselor as needed.
- Set aside some fun time that has nothing to do with Odyssey problems.
- Keep teams on the *must do* list -- they tend to focus on the "maybe do" list.
- Simulate every aspect of competition and practice this frequently.
- Have a checklist for loading, staging, tasks, etc.
- Remember that "think time" in Spontaneous is generally 33% of the problem. Teach your team to use this time well, including asking questions.
- Get the team to continually verify that their solution meets the problem requirements, and is focused on the Spirit of the Problem.
- Encourage team members to do some thinking outside of meetings – at home, for example – and write down their ideas.
- Use Spontaneous practice to break up long practice/work sessions – this will help to prevent burnout and boredom.
- The team as a group has a personality. Learn how that personality works.
- Try to have each team member initially generate several possible solutions (or partial solutions). Help the team to see how pieces from the different solutions can be combined.

COACHING DO'S

- Teach your team the creative problem-solving process, and use it throughout the problem resolution.
- Help students understand that winning is not the goal.
- Help students to see and recognize the abilities of each team member and encourage team members to capitalize on the individual strengths of ALL.
- Help them get organized. Time management, record-keeping, and planning skills are just as critical as painting and script-writing.
- Try to answer a question with a question. Remember, any idea you say out loud is one they can't use.
- Help them give and take constructive criticism of IDEAS, but not of people.
- Help them learn to evaluate their ideas and progress continually.
- Set a good example of adult behavior; be a good role model for your team.
- Have team members write, illustrate, and design all details before beginning to build. Teach the team to "measure twice, cut once."
- Invite other adults to volunteer their time and talent to demonstrate skills for your team to learn. Try not to let these adults see the Long Term problem.
- Go over the score results with the team after a competition to help the team improve in future competitions.
- RELAX and enjoy seeing these creative young minds at work!!!

COACHING DON'TS

- Don't tell them a way to solve the problem. Instead, ask questions that help them find their own solutions.
- Don't allow any criticism of teammates' personalities or physical attributes.
- Don't step on their disagreements. Instead, let them work it out as part of learning to work as a team.
- Don't get flustered when the team makes mistakes along the way – this is part of the learning process.
- Don't allow them to be irresponsible. Help them to recognize that this hinders the entire team.
- Don't imply that they have failed if they don't win. Instead, help them to understand that it is only failure if they didn't try their best, or won't try again.
- Don't complain about judges, other teams, or other coaches.
- Don't allow the team to present a problem solution that clearly goes against the Spirit of the Problem or any of the limitations in the problem itself. Try to get them to spot problems themselves, but step in if time is running out.
- Don't dispute a judge's ruling unless the team members express a concern. Discuss their concern with them, and only go to the officials if the point they raise is valid and *the team* wants to pursue it.
- Don't get uptight. It's not your problem to solve.

SUMMARY

Coaching is a complex challenge. The challenge is for you to take this stepping stone to write your own master plan to become a master coach.

There are as many ways to coach as there are coaches, but the processes and principles remain basically the same. Stay motivated and enthusiastic. Work through difficult emotions and maintain a good relationship among the team members and yourself. Separate yourself from winning and losing, and focus on team development and ownership of their solution.

An important part of the coach's role is to be resourceful at keeping the organization and planning at top priority for all team members. You also need to provide a risk-free environment – physically, emotionally, socially, and mentally.

While there are not “wrong” answers in Odyssey, there are many “right” answers (and quite a few illegal answers). The team's job is to find a solution that is right for them, within the rules. This can only be achieved through listening, contributing, cooperating, refining, intense practice, and constant checking against the problem statement.

You must not inject your own solutions into the team's thinking, but you should certainly stop the team from going forward with a clearly illegal or unsportsmanlike solution. If you aren't sure whether or not to intervene, consult the Problem Captain or write for a Clarification.

Strive for perfection, but be ready and willing to accept the best that your team can offer, and congratulate and celebrate with them on a job well done.