

General Guidance for VOICES Coaches

This paper addresses health safety practices for Odyssey Teams, and practical guidance for preparing for a Virtual Tournament

- I. Participation in the Odyssey of the Mind (OOTM) program must abide by VA guidelines for health safety. Recommendations from the VOICES coaches who participated in the first Virtual World Finals
 - A. Address key health concerns expressed by your team members and their parents
 1. Enquire with your school about health guidance for extracurricular practices
 2. Be upfront with families about health expectations for the team
 3. Depending on the age of the members, parents may need to assist with training team members to use on line tools – Zoom sessions, instant messaging, sharing drawings or pictures via file sharing or on line graphics tools, etc.
 - B. Coach's Plan for Team
 1. Maintain health check on the team: keep careful attendance; wash hands often, wipe common tools, pens, spontaneous supplies, etc. If a team member exhibits suspicious symptoms, isolate and send member home.
 2. Venue: Look for a place to work that is large so that everyone can be separate for some of the practice times.
 - Weather and temperature permitting, hold outdoor meetings and have the kids sit 6 feet apart and wear masks.
 - When the weather turns too cold, plan to meet via google meet up or Zoom.
 3. Spontaneous practice: Everyone will wear masks. Use a very large table for separation and to help them speak loudly and clearly.
 - C. Incorporating Odyssey of the Mind Plan with health safety practices
 1. Set up chairs 6 feet apart on our deck and wiped them down with Clorox wipes before the meeting
 2. Keep a supply of disposable masks in case a mask must be replaced. Families can donate to the supply stock
 3. Provide hand sanitizer at all meetings; use frequently or periodically
 4. At first meeting, ask everyone if they felt comfortable with the social distancing measures, short amount of meeting time as a group, and wearing masks.
 5. Older team members (e.g., Div II and Div III) are expected to understand the safety measures.
 6. For younger team members (e.g., Primary and Div I), ask the parents if the child has issues with any of the safety measures.

D. These health safety practices will impact you as a coach. Recommendations from the VOICES coaches who participated in the first Virtual World Finals

1. Challenge: Continually create different approaches to build team energy and/or excitement related to creating the team solution, conceiving the theme, script, set, props, and costumes. Social distancing and Zoom sessions detract from team bonding by restricting spontaneous innovation and creativity associated with team work. To counteract these restrictions, consider the following:
 - Encourage constant communications and sharing ideas, improving and embellishing ideas
 - Encourage team members to provide useful, constructive, and positive feedback and encouraging words to motivate the team members maintain schedule on individual tasks
 - The team will become more productive the sooner they learn how to interact as a team via Zoom or in-person
2. Prepare for the video performance by practicing parts of the skit and recording the performance. Teach the team members how to critique their video performance. -
3. Praise the team and team members when they came up with something on their own to share with the team – Acknowledgement of effort, creativity, team work gives them a sense of self pride in an accomplishment

E. Odyssey of the Mind judges are trained to acknowledge the creativity and team work incorporated in the team solution. The judges feedback is provided while interacting with the team after the performance, the comments on post-it notes, and scores. The team members should not be shy about who created what aspect of the solution.

F. With so many other activities cancelled or placed on hold since March 2020, Odyssey of the Mind encourages development of creative approaches to problem solving and team building. We look forward to hosting traditional tournaments.

- II. The Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide provides guidelines and tips for coaches for creative problem solving, and to prepare and participate in the traditional (in-person) tournament. CCI provided additional guidance on how to prepare for a virtual tournament.

A. Which key traditional guidelines did you modify or not apply because of COVID restrictions and the virtual tournament requirements?

1. After the team develops the concept for the solution, help the team develop and assign building tasks and schedule – script, set design & construction, costume design & construction, etc. [project management]
 - Note which tasks must be accomplished before another can begin.
 - Use the list to track accomplishments and work to do. Add tasks as necessary.
 - Decompose large tasks and create smaller tasks and assign
 - Encourage assignment of tasks to small groups (2 or 3 persons)

2. On a weekly basis or after practice sessions, gather the team and ask them to **reflect and identify what went well** at that practice and what could be improved.
 - Capture these comments and post them to review regularly.
 3. Schedule team days for merging designs, construction, and painting. You may schedule different smaller task teams on different days depending on space available
 4. The team may decide to have team members construct their personal costumes and/or props. Ensure they have access to creative ideas and a wide variety of materials. Some tasks require tools for set or prop construction or creative craft skills for costumes and props (e.g., sewing, embellishing style elements, etc. The team members must help cultivate these ideas among themselves. Enforce and mitigate outside assistance.
 5. Spontaneous problems at virtual tournaments will be only verbal. Coaches are encouraged to practice hands-on problems as they could spark new creative ideas for the team solution.
- B. Ensure the team reviews thoroughly (several times) the virtual tournament format and video requirements.
1. Identify key items/activities to be judged and scored.
 2. Review the team performance video and photos from a judge's perspective. A judge cannot score an item if it cannot be seen.
 3. Develop a sequence of events for the video – a storyboard – to present the team solution for the judges.
 4. Try different media (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, etc.) for recording the team performance. Rehearse for a variety of situations and effects. Schedule time to practice and record performances to help the team be more creative with the media.