

Grade Odyssey of the Mind Intro Meeting

What is OM?

A journey of the mind. An opportunity to use creativity to solve “problems”, have fun, and discover strengths you didn’t know you have.

A competition that combines “Long-term” problem solving and “Spontaneous” thought.

Long-term: Solving a puzzle, with an emphasis on creativity; No wrong way to do things, but the more creative and original, the better.

- *Example:* You need to link the Iliad (an ancient Greek poem) to a modern-day event (e.g. Neil Armstrong’s moon landing), and a number of activities must take place throughout (e.g. a piece of your “set” transforms)
- **Outside assistance “OA”:** Adults, friends, siblings, or others giving them the idea or doing the work for them for the long-term problem; Outside assistance is **NOT ALLOWED!!** Okay to ask questions that lead them to the idea, but cannot give them the idea; If this happens, they cannot use the idea
- All kids on the team participate
- Problem types:
 - Problem 1, the “vehicle” problem: Build a vehicle
 - Problem 2, the “technical” problem: Build a basic device / robot
 - Problem 3, the “classics” problem: Based on a classic story, like Romeo and Juliet
 - Problem 4, the “structure” problem: Make a structure out of wood that can hold weight
 - Problem 5, the “performance” problem: Write a script, build a set, and perform

Spontaneous: Thinking creatively in the moment and normally happens in 5-10 minutes.

- *Example:* Come up with as many examples of something that is inside something that is inside something else. For example, Yolk is inside an egg which is inside a chicken
- OA is okay when practicing Spontaneous, but focus it on teaching the kids how to think creatively about the Spontaneous problems
- All kids participate

Total points = Long-term points + Spontaneous points. Teams are judged against others in the same age / long-term problem category, and the teams with the highest points go on to the next competition.

Goals and expectations

Coaches’ goals: Have fun and create an environment for each OMer to explore their creativity, learn to problem-solve, work as a team, and create lasting friendships.

OMers’ goals: Up to them to define!

OMers’ expectations: School-appropriate behavior, giving their best, and come to practice.

Parents’ goals: Stay connected to what the team is doing (via emails, texts, etc.), get them to practice and other events (Spontaneous nights), communicate conflicts timely, and support their “homework” between meetings.

General meeting details

When:

Where:

Transportation:

Snacks:

Snow days: In the case of a snow day, we will communicate accordingly, possibly with OMers working on their own “OM-work” at home (e.g. costumes)

Christmas break: We will coordinate meetings as the dates draw closer

What to expect for the year

Meetings and homework

- 1 meeting a week through the end of the year
- After the new year, will (almost definitely) move to 2 practices a week (adding on Sunday afternoons)
- “OM-work” in between practices

Meeting activities

- First couple months are largely spent brainstorming ideas, practicing Spontaneous, and writing the script
- Then, move into making props and costumes, building devices, etc.
- Last month is spent practicing the performance, finishing props / costumes, etc.

Dates to know

Spontaneous nights: FRIDAY 11/1, 12/6 & 1/31

- North Rockford Middle School
- Important that OMers attend to get a sense of what the true competition will be like
- Also great for parents to “tag along” to really start understanding Spontaneous

Competitions:

- **Regional:** North Rockford Middle School on Sat., February 22nd (all day)
- **State:** Sat., March 13th Middleville (all day)
- **World Finals:** May 21 – May 24th OR May 22-May 25 @ Michigan State University

Think about vacations and/or other family commitments and let us know

Commitments (monetary and otherwise)

OM T-shirt (\$15; optional but STRONGLY encouraged); Shirts are Rockford orange and stay the same year-to-year, only changing the creative quote on the back

Snack (\$20); Coach will arrange a snack for the kids

Judge thank you (\$5); Each team must provide a judge for the Regional competition

Total of \$40 per kid;

Competition enrollment costs: RPS covers these

Long-term problem materials:

- The intent is to use 2nd-hand materials, not purchase new materials (costumes, sets, etc.); So start saving those toilet paper tubes, extra paint / glue, old sheets, etc... There will be need!
- If you do purchase items, please keep track of those costs so we can even out at the end of the year; HOWEVER, please keep in mind that their TOTAL COSTS CANNOT EXCEED \$125, so please spend thoughtfully

Talents: Know how to sew? How to make paper mache? Teaching the kids these skills is not Outside Assistance, but doing it for them is. Stay in touch with your kids on what assignments they have

COMPETITION VOLUNTEER: We need 1 parent volunteer for 2 hours the day of the competition (will not conflict with the time of our team's competition); You will be trained on the spot; Cannot tag team

What's next?

Next meeting Discuss what each child thinks their top 3 OM-related strengths are; For example: "I'm great at writing stories", "I like to build things", or "I'm a good artist"; **HOMEWORK:** Have your child write down 3-5 of their strengths and we'll discuss at the first meeting

- Familiarize the team with problems

Ongoing Communication

- We'll send an email to the group after each practice that briefly updates everyone on what we did, OMers assignments, and the next meeting
- OMers will be responsible for understanding their detailed "OM-work"

Outside assistance

Students learn best when they complete tasks on their own, and they develop a sense of pride and increased self-esteem when they go beyond what is expected. To ensure that team members get the full benefits of participation, and to ensure fairness, team members must design and create all aspects of their problem solution.

This includes their membership sign, props, all technical requirements (vehicles, structures, etc.) and costumes. These must either (1) be made by the team members or (2) be put together by the team members from commercially produced parts. If team members are not able to make a solution, prop, costume, or sign that they have designed, or if a coach feels the tools they wish to use to make an item are too dangerous for team members to operate, then the team members must find another way to construct the item or redesign it so they can make it themselves.

Although no one may assist the team members in solving the problem, it is not Outside Assistance to use something that was created by someone who is not on the team — provided that it was not created to help solve the problem in any way. For example, if a school has an “OotM closet” where it keeps materials used from past years, future teams may select and use those items without penalty. If the materials were created by the members of the current team, that is, there are no members from the original roster missing from the current one, they will be considered team-created. Otherwise, they will be judged as commercially produced. These items, such as props and backdrops, will be considered the same as items found in a thrift shop, school theater department, etc. Any commercially produced kit that is assembled as intended by the manufacturer is not considered team-created. Using commercially produced kit parts in a way that is different from the intent is considered team-created.

Teams must complete the Outside Assistance Form in the Appendix and give it to the Staging Area Judge prior to its performance. They must state whether they had any outside assistance and, if so, the nature of that assistance. The judges will assess an Outside Assistance penalty based on how crucial the assistance was to the team’s solution.

Coaches act as facilitators, but they are not allowed to suggest how a team should solve a problem. They may pose thought-provoking questions, but they should never hint at a solution. If the team asks for an opinion, the coach should respond, “You decide.” Unless a situation is deemed potentially dangerous, always let the team make the final decisions when developing a solution.

At competition, others are allowed to help the team transport props and other problem materials into the Check-In and Staging Areas. However, others may not help the team assemble backdrops or anything else, or apply makeup, fix costumes, etc. If they do, the team will receive an Outside Assistance penalty. Outside Assistance penalties are based on the judges’ observations and/or the team’s statements, not on hearsay from others.

Once the team begins working on its long-term problem solution, if a team member leaves the team for any reason, that person may not be taken off the roster, since he/she contributed to the problem. If a team member is replaced, and it takes the team over the seven member limit, the team will receive an Outside Assistance penalty.

Parents and other supporters may act as tutors or instructors, but they must not make suggestions on how to solve the problem. For example, a parent may teach the members how to sew if they ask, but cannot suggest that they sew and/or design a costume for the team’s solution.