



## What is Odyssey of the Mind (OotM)?

Odyssey of the Mind is a creative problem solving program which teaches students how to think divergently by providing open-ended problems that appeal to a wide range of interests. Students solve these problems by writing skits, sewing costumes, making props and, depending on the problem choice, building vehicles, technical elements or balsa wood structures. North Penn's Odyssey of the Mind program is open to students of all ages and abilities. NP OotM is supported by a district coordinator but is driven by parent volunteers.

## How are teams formed?

The best teams are a mix of students with varying interests and talents, eg; writers, artists, actors, musicians, builders, etc. An OotM team is made up of a coach and five to seven students.

**Coaches.** Teams are responsible to recruit their own coaches. Coaches must be adults, 18 years old or older. Usually, the coach of the team is the parent of one (or more) team members although a team could recruit another adult to coach, eg; aunt, uncle, friend, etc. All coaches are required to submit their driver's license for a background check; these checks are done free-of-charge at any North Penn school.

**Students.** Usually, classmates or friends from the same school come together to form an OotM Mind team. Teams are formed by grade level and a team's division is determined by the grade level of the oldest team member. Team members could be from different schools as long as both schools have current memberships.

- Primary Division.* Students in kindergarten through grade two.
- Division One.* Students in grades three through five.
- Division Two.* Students in grades six through eight.
- Division Three.* Students in grades nine through twelve.

## What is the time commitment for a student on an Odyssey of the Mind team?

Time commitment varies by team since team members set their own goals which drive their pace and schedule. Teams that aspire to be more competitive will meet longer and/or more often. Generally, teams meet once a week for about two hours. As competition day approaches, teams might schedule additional meetings to accomplish their goals. The coach will work with the team to set the schedule and plan meetings.

**Competition dates.** All teams can participate in the regional competition. Teams can also advance to state and world competitions based upon their standing at the regional and state competition.

- Regional Competition:* Saturday in February/March
- State Finals:* Saturday in Early April
- World Finals:* Wednesday - Saturday, last week in May, Iowa State U/ Michigan State U

## Where are Odyssey of the Mind meetings held?

Meeting place varies by team. Team meetings can be held at school or at the home of the coach or another parent. Coaches can reserve a room to hold meetings at a NP school. During a meeting, team members will work on a solution to the long term problem they have chosen to solve. The team will also practice spontaneous problem solving. Snacks are another important part of every OotM meeting! 😊

## What is the difference between Long Term Problems and Spontaneous Problems?

Both problems are designed for competition, with scoring components and rules to be followed. But as their name suggests, the time needed to develop a solution is very different. A team will work on one long term problem for a long while; these problems require months of preparation and hard work. A team might practice spontaneous problems often but each of these problems can be solved in a 10-20 minute time frame. Spontaneous problems are designed to improve a team's spur-of-the-moment problem-solving skills. Teams will perform their long term solution and also solve a spontaneous problem at the regional competition.

## What are Odyssey of the Mind long term problems?

Long Term problems are different every year but they fall into general categories:

- **VEHICLE** Teams use original engineering to create a vehicle and incorporate it into their skit.
- **TECHNICAL** Teams incorporate tech elements into their skit like special effects, robots, etc.
- **CLASSICS** Team's skit is based on classical literature, artwork, music, culture, or history.
- **STRUCTURE** Team's skit includes a weight-bearing balsa wood structure that holds weight.
- **PERFORMANCE** Team's skit integrates stage/ drama elements like set changes/ costuming.
- **PRIMARY** Performance problem for teams in the Primary Division, Grades K-2.

## What are the costs associated with Odyssey of the Mind?

Generally, it will cost \$25-\$50 per team member to participate in OotM through March. Registration fees are usually paid by the Home & School. Team expenses vary and are controlled by the team.

**School registration.** \$100/ school \* Fee required for a school to form teams and participate in OotM  
Most registrations are funded by the school's Home and School Association. Otherwise, teams in the school contribute toward the cost.

**Team registration.** \$60-\$75/ team \* Fee required for a team to compete in the regional competition  
Most often, team members contribute toward the cost of team registration. Some Home and School Associations fund team registration but most do not.

**Team supplies.** Varies by team. \* Cost of supplies needed by a team to create problem solution  
Team members contribute toward the cost of supplies needed by the team. Generally, teams will collect \$25-\$50 from each team member. This varies by team.

**Team snacks.** Varies by team. \* Cost of snacks needed to keep a team engaged and focused! ☺  
Team members contribute snacks for team meetings. This varies by team.

**Spontaneous Fun Night.** \* Optional

Teams can participate in this activity where all the North Penn OotM teams gather to eat pizza and practice spontaneous problem solving. Most district teams participate but this is an optional activity.

**NP Odyssey of the Mind t-shirt.** \$15. \* Optional

Most team members purchase the NPSD OotM t-shirt to wear at the regional competition. This is a fund raiser and proceeds are used to assist teams that advance to the state/world competitions. These funds are also used to defray the cost of the annual Spontaneous Fun Night (SFN). At SFN, team members vote on the t-shirt design.



If you have additional questions, please email Joanne Wiernusz,  
NPSD OotM District Coordinator at [wiernujs@npenn.org](mailto:wiernujs@npenn.org)

