

The Parents' Role at Competition

We parents are the drivers, the carriers, the huggers, the cheerers, the last-minute hardware store runners, the door holders, the floor sitters, and the mighty prop protectors. Our role at competitions is quite complicated. We have to be supportive without getting in the way. We have to realize that, until our children's spontaneous and long-term competitions are over, we don't own our children; their coach owns them.

Don't go too close to where the children are making last-minute repairs and don't try to make conversation. Like any top competitors, their concentration is focused on the job to be done. Try to stay around the periphery of the team's work area. That way, they can find you if there is something within your realm to provide.

One important thing to remember is **DO NOT TOUCH**. Yes, you can help carry in the stuff. But don't cut one extra string off a costume. Don't pick up a paintbrush to make that sign just a little bit neater. You could cost the team huge penalties in "outside assistance."

Parents must refrain from talking to the judges **NO MATTER WHAT**. That's the coach's job. Try to discourage team members from blaming teammates, coaches, judges, or other teams if things go wrong. Make sure you don't attach blame either. All good teams have lived through major disasters on the way to becoming champions.

Most of all, cheer for your team... and everyone else's too. When the competition is over, stop for dinner out with the other parents who know how tiring staying out of the way can be. The next tournament, whether it's next year or next month, is just around the corner!

DO:

- Remember the coach is the adult directly responsible for the team and the only adult who can approach the officials. Any concerns you have should be discussed privately with the coach. If you confront officials, you risk having a stiff penalty assessed against your team.
- Remember, if you observed an apparent penalty, the judges probably

did too. Their scoring will reflect that. Officials do not embarrass students by announcing penalties.

- Encourage team members to have a contingency plan if something does not work. Help them relax so they can do their best.
- Remind any non-team member who appears to be giving outside assistance that Odyssey officials are always on duty.
- Exhibit good sportsmanship. Applaud for all teams at the appropriate time.
- Stay away from the spontaneous competition area. It may be intimidating for other teams to have groups of strange adults hovering nearby. Only the team members should go beyond the waiting areas.
- Encourage your team to respect the host competition site by treating the facility respectfully.
- Try to sit with your delegation at the awards ceremony.
- Remind your team to have a good time. Remember, what is important in Odyssey of the Mind is the process, not the result. All teams at the competition are already winners.



DON'T:

- Flash signs such as "We're # 1" or chant in front of other teams. Doing so marks your school as poor sports and doesn't help make friends.
- Allow children to scream or be rowdy. Sound travels and such rowdiness gives credibility to a reputation of having wild or unruly students.
- Cost your team an outside assistance penalty. Don't say ANYTHING. Don't do anything for the team members. *This is their production.* Resist the urge to apply makeup, style hair, help put on costumes or assemble props or equipment.
- Go near the spontaneous rooms.
- Ask questions about spontaneous. Discussing spontaneous prior to the end of competition can disqualify a team. It is tempting to ask how the children feel they did, but you must avoid the topic entirely. Help them maintain the code of honor surrounding spontaneous competition.
- Alter seating boundaries set up for the performance areas or awards ceremony.