

# Style in Odyssey of the Mind

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Beginning teams always seem to have difficulty in dealing with style because it does not seem central to winning in Odyssey competitions. In reality, because of the closeness of scores of both state and World competitions, performance on style is as important as performances on long-term or spontaneous problems. So, what is this thing called “*style*” and what can you, as a coach, do to stimulate the creative development of style performance?

Style is defined as “*that which is added to the solution of a problem and relates to the nature of the problem, but is not required to solve the problem*”. Any aspect of the problem or solution may be expanded upon to become part of the style presentation. Note that it is the expansion which is style, *not* the required parts of the problem or any part of the solution which will receive points as part of the long-term problem. Some of the things that might be included as part of style are:

## Possible Style Areas\*

### Painting

- a. on things
- b. on back drops
- c. on people

### Costumes

- a. Drama
- b. Humor
- c. Tragedy

### Auditory Accompaniment

- a. Song
- b. Music
- c. Rhythm
- d. Sound effects
- e. Poem
- f. Chant
- g. Rhyme

### Patterned or controlled movement

- a. Dance (various types)
- b. Exercise
- c. March

### Descriptive prose

- a. Story
- b. Play
- c. Narrative

### Created Equipment

- a. Things that do things
- b. Props
- c. Scenery

Decorations on things

Make-up on people

Details on required things

Coordination between people

**\*Except when scored as part of the long-term problem**

You should encourage the team members to evaluate and re-evaluate their practice sessions always asking themselves, “How else might we improve our performance?” and “What else does the performance need to really look and sound nifty?”

As the style presentation develops, you may wish to help the students to see themselves as the judges will see them. This is best done with a video recording of a practice style presentation. Put the camera at approximately how far the judges will be from the performance and under what lighting you think will be available. Turn the volume down on the microphone since *most* students are not loud enough. Then have them perform.

### **What to Look For**

- Can each and every voice be heard?
- Can the sound effects, music, etc. be heard?
- Can the school sign be easily read?
- Can crucial details in the scenery/props be seen?
- Are there visual distractions which detract from the performance?
- Are there auditory distractions which detract from the performance?
- Is the presentation smooth with good transitions from one segment to another?
- Is the humor funny?
- Does the action show up and show what it is designed to show?
- Can the performance be accurately replicated (is there a script)?

### **Guidelines for Selecting Free Choice Style Area**

- Whatever it is, the judges have to be able to see it.
- The more unique and creative the area the more likely it is to be remembered.
- Attention attracting areas are better than those that do not!
- Humor is likely to be remembered, as it parody.
- The more elaborate it is the more likely it is to be noticed; same goes for Gaudy!
- Do not include things that are evaluated as part of the long term problem solution.
- Unexpected things are likely to be remembered, surprise is usually good.

Style areas should be chosen so that they will have maximum impact when compared to other teams. They must also be areas of strength from the performance.

The final thing to share with the children and for the coach to think about is the facility in which the performance will be given. Large halls or gyms will have, probably, several things going on at the same time. The lighting will be different from where they have practiced. Last but not least, it will be noisy and confusing. The more your team can practice, the easier time they will have.