

North Penn Odyssey of the Mind Frequently Asked Questions

What is Odyssey of the Mind (OM)?

Odyssey of the Mind is a creative problem-solving program which inspires students to be creative. Students are challenged to solve open-ended problems that appeal to a wide range of interests. Students solve these problems by writing skits, sewing costumes, making props, building vehicles, creating technical elements and building balsa wood structures. North Penn's Odyssey of the Mind program is open to students of all ages and abilities. NP OM is supported by a district coordinator but is driven by parent volunteers.

How are teams formed?

NP OM holds an Open House event in the fall of each year for students interested in participating in Odyssey of the Mind. Open House details are posted on the website. Parents and students can attend the Open House to learn about NP's OM Program. Teams are formed after the Open House, based on a student's school and grade level. The best teams are a mix of students with varying interests and talents, e.g.; writers, artists, actors, musicians, builders, etc. An OM 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 team members but a team could recruit another adult to coach, e.g.; aunt, uncle, friend, etc. All volunteer coaches are required to get clearances. As per NPSD policy, all volunteers who will be responsible for the team members' welfare or will have direct contact with team members on a regular and repeated basis must submit clearances to North Penn School District.

Students. Usually, classmates or friends from the same school come together to form an OM 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 one to 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 competitions.

Regional Competition: Saturday in February/March

State Finals: Saturday in Early April

World Finals: Wednesday - Saturday, last week in May, Iowa State U or Michigan State U (alternating years)

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 OM 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 to 20 minute time frame. Spontaneous problems are designed to improve a team's impromptu problem-solving skills. Teams will perform their long-term solution and also solve one spontaneous problem at the regional competition.

What are Odyssey of the Mind long term problems?

The theme of the Long-Term problems are different each year but they fall into six general categories:

- **VEHICLE** Teams use original engineering to create a vehicle and incorporate it into a skit.
- **TECHNICAL** Teams incorporate into a skit tech elements like special effects, robots, etc.
- **CLASSICS** Team's dramatic 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? *based on 2024 actual costs

School registration. \$190/ school * Fee required for a school to form teams and participate in OM. Most registrations are funded by the school's Home and School Association or for NPHS, the Office of Student Activities. Without this funding, teams in the school may be asked to contribute toward the cost. The NP OM parent group (NPOA) contacts HSAs on behalf of the schools where teams have formed.

Team registration. \$175/ team * Fee required for a team to compete in the regional competition. Home and School Associations may fund team registration or the teams may need to pay these fees themselves. Teams should contact their HSA to request funding on behalf of all the teams in the same school. If teams advance to the State Final and World Final Competitions, there is a registration fee on each level. The costs of attending these tournaments vary and is the responsibility of the team members and their families.

Team supplies. Varies by team. Cost of supplies needed by a team to create problem solution. Team members contribute toward this cost which may be \$50-\$75 or more. This cost varies greatly by team.

Team snacks. Varies by team. Cost of snacks needed to keep a team engaged and focused! Parents of team members contribute snacks for team meetings. This may vary by team.

Spontaneous Fun Night. Optional

Teams can participate in this activity where all the North Penn OM 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. \$20. * Optional

Team members are invited to submit designs and vote to choose the winning t-shirt design. Most team members purchase the t-shirt to wear at the regional tournament. 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).

What is the role of the parent of a student participating in North Penn Odyssey of the Mind?

Parents should realize the importance of supporting the team throughout the season. With help from every parent, the team is more likely to have a great experience while participating in NP OM!

Here is a list of simple things parents can do to support the team:

- Provide snacks for team meetings; stay to help the coach. ** especially important for younger teams*
- Respect Outside Assistance rule: "team cannot have assistance from any individual outside the team!"
- Assist with 'field trips' so team can purchase materials (craft store, etc.). Cannot suggest what to buy!
- Keep comments positive; positivity is most likely to keep the team motivated and build self-esteem!
- Find spontaneous problems on the internet, gather materials then run the problems during meetings.

NP OM website: https://www.npenn.org/for_families/odyssey_of_the_mind/welcome_to_np_ootm