

## **TOO BUSY FOR SPONTANEOUS PRACTICE? THINK AGAIN!**

It is common for new coaches to have their teams concentrate on the solution to the Long Term problem and put the preparation for the Spontaneous competition on hold. These same coaches are often surprised to find that, while their Long Term scores were about the same as other teams', the scores for the Spontaneous problem were vastly different. "If it hadn't been for Spontaneous, we would have had a shot at going to the State Tournament." In fact, rather than the Long Term scores, it is most often the difference in teams' Spontaneous scores that determines-which teams move on to the next level of competition.

As the time for the Regional Tournament approaches, the list of things that need to be done on the Long Term problem may tempt you to forego regular Spontaneous practice. All coaches run into this dilemma at some time, and some have found ways to solve it.

Some co-coaches designate one coach as the Spontaneous coach, and one the Long Term coach. That way neither one becomes overwhelmed, and the kids work on both with good results.

Some teams begin the season with two regular weekly meetings: one is always devoted to Spontaneous, and one is always on Long Term. Additional meetings are eventually added to work on the Long Term, but the Spontaneous meeting remains a fixture on the weekly schedule.

There are ways to continue to work on Spontaneous without sacrificing work on the Long Term and vice versa. It just needs to be seen as a priority throughout the process.

### **VERBAL**

In a Verbal spontaneous problem, the team members generate as many creative verbal answers as they can in a short time period. Points are awarded for what is said. Creativity figures heavily in the scoring, as do humor and puns.

Examples:

- Suppose you have just cleaned out your closets and have a big pile of shoes that you hate to throw away. What would you do with them? (hats)
- List something you can do with your feet that you can also do with your hands.
- List alternative ways to get from the mall (other than a car) to home.
- Who pushed Humpty Dumpty off the wall and why was it done?
- Give a reason why someone might come running from the woods, shivering from fright.
- List an item you might put into your footlocker and give a reason why.

### **HANDS-ON**

In a Hands-on spontaneous problem, the team is given a task to perform in a short period of time. Points are not awarded for what is said, but for what is accomplished. Teamwork figures heavily in the scoring, as do ingenuity and technical success in completing the task.

Examples:

- Using only an envelope, a mailing label, and a rubber band, the team must use them to stretch the farthest distance possible.
- The team is given a length of yarn and a basketball. Without cutting the yarn, they must devise a means of carrying the basketball fifteen feet without touching the ball with their hands.
- The team is given an assortment of everyday items and told to create a vehicle that will travel between two points.

## VERBAL HANDS-ON

In a Verbal Hands-on spontaneous problem, the team is usually given some object and asked to use it in creative ways or say something about it. Or can be a two part problem. In the first part the team is given some materials and asked to make something, and then in part two, they are asked to say something about what they made.

Examples:

- These objects (show two unusual object) have been dug up from the ground together. What could they have been or done?
  - The team is presented with five boxes, into which they can reach to feel an item inside. The team members must respond to what they feel inside the boxes.
  - Perform two presentations involving the selling of a used car (give the team a photograph of an old, junked car).
  - give each team member a square of aluminum foil. During the first 4 minutes they can shape the foil any way they choose.
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**You can help the team in any way when you practice spontaneous.** Unlike Long Term, Spontaneous has no outside assistance constraints except on the day of the tournament in the competition room (if non-performing team members help the five who are performing, they will receive a penalty.)

**Only five team members perform on tournament day,** and your team may wish to choose a different five for verbal than non-verbal. They will be told the nature of the problem when they enter the room, and have to decide which five will participate.

In practice sessions, you may wish to have five give answers and the other team members keep score, rotating who participates. Keeping score helps team members learn to recognize "common" and "creative" answers when they hear them, which, in turn, helps them recognize common and creative when they think of them!

**Practice many ways of taking turns giving answers:** start with simply going around the circle and advance to flipping cards, limiting answers, spinning a spinner, rolling a die ... any methods that help a team be prepared for giving answers in any order. You can take away some of the mystery by making the challenge fun: think of creative ways to choose who gives an answer --- assign a color to each team member and let them close their eyes and draw M&Ms out of a bowl to see who will respond (and the person drawing the M&M gets to eat it)

**Practice the flow of responding.** Start with a simple exercise ... even just everyone saying his or her name over and over again. Advance to "name things in a kitchen," or "name things that are blue" ... anything the help the team see what giving answers one after the other feels like and sounds like.

**Practice what to do if "one member of the team is stuck.** ANYONE can have trouble thinking of an answer sometimes, and all the team members need to feel comfortable with that moment of panic. Have them practice saying almost anything. Let them see that they can think up SOMETHING and say it, and have them focus on that something, rather than on the feeling of panic.

Most importantly for verbal spontaneous success, have the team members learn about many different subjects (read magazines or books, listen to music, learn about subjects that interest them.) Then let them practice making connections between those subjects and other one. You can make a game out of this by writing on cards and matching them. For example, make up cards appropriate for age and grade level that have colors, shapes, numbers, or, for older teams, abstract ideas, etc., and another stack of cards that have names, subjects, news items, etc. Then let the team practice matching the cards. For example, how is the number 3 like a dog? (Simple

(Primary or division 1) answer: "my aunt has 3 dogs;" more advanced (divisions 3 or 4) answer: "Cerberus") How is the color red connected to a circus? (Simple answer: "The big top has red stripes;" more advanced answer: "Romans had a saying that they longed for two things ... bread and circuses." By practicing making unusual connections, teams will begin to learn how to "think outside the box" to come up with more creative answers.

**ALWAYS praise good answers, and encourage the team members to tell which answers they heard they liked** (after they finish a problem). This way, over a period of time, all team members will receive positive feedback about answers they have thought of, and this will build confidence.

**Keep practices fun!!!** This is about learning to think on their feet, and team members should see this as a fun challenge, not a stressful situation!!! At the tournament, the most successful teams are the ones who are having a lot of fun, and who see spontaneous as an opportunity to show off their creativity. The coach often sets the tone for this attitude, so make spontaneous an enjoyable activity and if you, as a coach, feel concern about the team's ability, figure out other ways to practice, keeping things fun and not stressful.

**No matter what happens at competition, teamwork is reflected in how team members support each other if (when) something goes wrong.**

### **Speed Control**

In an effort to force teams to be more creative, several methods to control the speed in the way verbal responses to Spontaneous problems are given have been created. Here are some types of answering systems that have been used in the past. Teams may practice responding to Verbal or Verbal Hands-On problems using these systems.

**Playing Cards:** Assign each of the five team members a number from 1 to 5. Use only the Ace through 5 from one or more decks of playing cards. Shuffle the cards and place them face down in front of the team members. The coach will turn over the first card. The card number (Ace = 1) designates which team member will then answer. After responding, that team member will then turn over the next card and so on.

**Paddle:** Place a Ping-Pong paddle on the table. Before giving a response the team member must pick up the Paddle and hold it over his/her head. After giving the response, the team member places the Paddle on the table before the next team member who is to respond.

**Removal:** Put 35 cards (or beans, macaroni, or wood blocks) in a container and place it on a table in front of the team. Each team member is to remove one item from the container before giving a response. When all items are removed from the container or time runs out (whichever is first), the team must stop.

**Dice:** Assign each team member a number from one to five. The coach will roll the dice the first time. The team member with the number showing on the dice will give a response. After giving the response, the team member will roll the dice. The team member whose number appears will then respond, and so on. If the number six appears, the team member who rolled the dice must respond again.

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Expect the Unexpected. Don't worry if you have not seen anything resembling this problem before. There's a good chance that nobody else has either.

Listen to the Rules. Formulate questions after the rules are read and not during. How can you listen if you are thinking of a question? Nine times out of ten the question will be answered.

Often, the team can stand or sit. The presence of a table and chairs does not mean teams have to sit down for spontaneous. Some kids literally think better on their feet.

Think of categories for answers to verbal spontaneous problems. The teams can think about lots of topics as “go to” lists: reptiles, emotions, bodies of water, geography, food, sports, music, current events, movies, books – kids can focus on coming up with an answer that fits their categories if they are stuck for an answer.

Plan on doing 2 or more spontaneous problems per meeting

Invent your own. (Div III have team members create and run)

Keep a good supply of materials on hand – raid that kitchen drawer

Ask the team to critique themselves, If the team thinks they handled a problem poorly, talk about strategies to improve, then repeat the problem a week or two later.

When practicing, Include everyone, not just 5.

Near competition time, use 5 but rotate so you have backup – **expected the unexpected on tournament day**

A coach or a parent can participate, but beware—we think differently

Be flexible during practice but get more realistic near tournament time, stick to the limits

Alter a problem to make it harder for Div III

Help Improve Spontaneous Scores

1. Listen carefully to the instructions, rules and scoring.
2. Ask questions if you don't understand something BUT BE CAREFUL
3. Have someone assigned to read the team copy of the problem

The team copy is for the team's use. Read along with the judges and refer to it often. Pick it up and look at it! That's OK! Who on the team keeps track of the rules, who notices the details? It is easy to miss a simple rule that can ruin a great solution.

4. Have someone assigned to watch time NO ELECTRONICS
5. Have someone assigned to start the conversation
6. Never argue with a judge, it only wastes time
7. Don't waste time trying to think of a creative response if the team member has a common one. Give the common response and perhaps it will stimulate other team members to give creative responses.
8. Have someone assigned to start the conversation
  - a. “So, what materials do we have?”
  - b. “Mary, What do you think we could do with this?”
9. Have someone assigned to look over the materials – take an inventory – know everything you have to work with
10. Practice ways to use materials in different ways (Envelopes – sticky labels – folded paper)
11. Never give up. Don't stop working until the judges says time is up
12. Budget time. Allow enough time to think about various alternatives to solving the problem. Avoid long discussions or arguments over who is "in charge" or whose idea will be used.
13. DECISION MAKING: If the team members disagree on a solution what does the team do? Some teams have a decision maker who makes the final decision. Does the team need or want a captain? How will they make decisions quickly?
14. SCORE KEEPING: Pay attention to the score points. Where will the team get the most points in a problem? Practice looking at the points of different kinds of problems.

15. BUILDING: Who will do the building if it is a Hands On problem? Everyone? One or two? Who is good at building and has good fine motor skills? Think about what works and what doesn't. Can the team switch if say artistic (drawing or mask making) or athletic (throwing, reaching, jumping) skills are required instead of building skills?

PLANNING: Decide in advance of the competition who will be on the Verbal team, Hands On team and Verbal/Hands On team. Should the students field the best teams possible or give everyone a chance? Depends on the teams goals— are they seeking to move to the next level of competition or do they want everyone to get experience. Both positions are valid. Who decides who is on what team? Some teams decide by secret ballot, with each team selecting the best spontaneous specialty team in their view, others openly discuss the options with team members well aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Should a team member avoid an area of weakness? Depends. How will your team make this decision?

TEAMWORK: Many Hand On problems include teamwork points. What are the judges looking for in good teamwork? What can your team do to showcase how well the team works together? Everyone does something well. Well-prepared teams know the strengths of their teammates and know how to work out new issues quickly. This takes time to develop. **Watch a skilled high school team do a practice spontaneous!**

LISTENING: How does the team make sure all of the ideas are heard in the spontaneous? If a quiet member of the team has the best solution will the team miss it?

JUDGES: Who are the Judges? What will they see as funny? Are they more like your friends or your parents/teachers?

KEEP IT FUN!!!

PRACTICE... PRACTICE ... PRACTICE!

<http://www.missouriodyssey.org/spont.html>

<http://nepaootm.com/spontaneous/>

<http://va.odysseyofthemind.org/weekproblemarchive.html>

<https://www.odysseyofthemind.com/shop/supportmaterials.php>

<http://lsemel.github.io/odyssey/spont/js-spontaneous.html>

<http://www.swopnet.com/ed/OM/spontaneous.html>

Watch teams in action: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afGRIMQJ44I>

## COMPETITION DAY PROCEDURES FOR SPONTANEOUS PROBLEMS

1. All team members and coach should report to the Spontaneous Holding Room, 15 minutes BEFORE schedule time.
2. One team member should check in the team at the check in desk for their division. A coach can accompany them but have the team member talk to the check in judge.
  - a. KNOW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NUMBER, NAME, PROBLEM, DIVISION
3. During the wait time have some activity to pass the time and to get the team's brain working but don't overdo it.
4. A judge will come to the holding room to get the team. They will announce your school, membership number, problem, division and possibly team (A, B, etc.). Check and double check that the judge has the right team
5. Team members ONLY go to the Spontaneous Problem Room – NO COACHES ALLOWED.
  - a. Don't worry about Primary teams, they are well watched over.
  - b. Coaches need to stay in the holding room
6. The team can talk on the way but should stay as quiet as possible
7. When entering the room the judges in the room will confirm they have the correct team
8. There will be 5 judges in the room
9. The team should greet the judges, shake hands, say hello, introduce themselves
10. Stay together as a group and follow the judge's instructions
11. Judge will announce the type of problem and the team will select their 5 members
12. Extra team members can leave or stay – If they stay, they have to stay quiet and motionless.
  - a. Penalties can be assessed at the judge's discretion
13. One judge will read and reread the problem
14. The team will get a copy of the problem to refer to
15. DO NOTHING – TOUCH NOTHING - UNTIL TOLD TO BEGIN BY THE TIMING JUDGE
16. When the problem is over the judges will thank the team and the team will leave. No scores will be given at this time. No questions should be asked about how the team did.
17. The team is escorted back to the Holding Room
18. DO NOT TALK ABOUT THE PROBLEM
  - a. Teams should be instructed to not talk about their problem
  - b. Coaches and parents should not ask the team any detail about the problem
  - c. Do not Facebook, tweet, Instagram, vimeo, pinterest, yelp, google+
  - d. Why? Because you might give another team, in your region or another, an advantage
19. Scores are revealed after the award ceremony. There is no process to contest scores but concerns should be raised with the Spontaneous Problem Captain
20. Spontaneous problem is worth up to 100 points. The team with the highest raw score in each problem receives 100; every other team receives a percentage of 100 based on its raw score. Raw score is what the judges in the room give.

# 2013 REGIONAL TOURNAMENT

## Verbal Spontaneous Problem: A Walk Home

*A. When the team members enter the room, tell them, "This is a verbal problem. The five team members who will compete please step over to the competition area (indicate area). The others must sit quietly in these seats (indicate seats) and watch or leave the room. They cannot participate in any way."*

**B. JUDGE READS TO TEAMS:** (Do not read material in parentheses.)

(1) You have 1 minute to think and 4 minutes to respond. You may ask the judges questions; however, time will continue. **You are not allowed talk to each other at any time.**

(2) You will receive 1 point for each common response and 5 points for each creative response.

(3) Each of you has 7 cards. **You will take turns in order. After you give a response, you will place one of your cards in the container** (*point to container*).

(4) Speak loudly and clearly. Once time begins, it will not be stopped.

(5) You should not repeat a response that has already been given, and you are not allowed to skip your turn. If one member of the team is stuck, the team is stuck.

(6) You will be finished when response time ends or when you have used all of your cards.

(7) **Your problem is to say something that would make you happy, sad, or scared while you were walking home from school.** For example, you might say, "Finding money on the ground would make me happy."

*(Repeat items in boldface. Begin by saying, "I repeat.")*

**C. FOR JUDGES ONLY:**

1. Judges should discuss and practice solving the problem before the first team competes. You may make decisions that are uniform to each team.

2. Practice reading the problem out loud before the first team competes. When reading to the teams, judges should illustrate the problem by indicating items and portraying actions.

3. Place two copies of the Team's Copy of the problem in full view of all team members before reading the problem to them. They may use them as a reference.

4. Give each team member a set of seven unnumbered cards. Each set should be different from the others, such as different colors, or marked with different shapes, etc. Make sure team members surrender a card after each response.

5. Place a container within reach of all team members. Make sure it has an opening large enough and that it can hold all 35 cards.

6. If there are fewer than five team members, give only seven cards to each member. The other cards are not used. Be sure to indicate this on the scoresheet, i.e., "only 4 team members." (This will also change the total possible responses.)

7. Be sure to give exactly 1 minute to think and 4 minutes to respond. Timing is critical. Team members responding as time ends may finish and be scored.

8. Score: 1 point for each common response, 5 points for each creative response.

**9. Examples of Common Responses:**

*Usual things that make someone happy, sad, etc.*

“I would be sad to get lost”;

“I would be sad to be late for dinner”;

“I would be happy to find extra lunch money”;

“I would be scared to see a stranger”;

“I would be scared if it got dark too fast”;

“I would be happy to be outside to play”;

“I would be happy to see a movie star”;

“I would be sad that I can’t still be with my classmates.”

**10. Examples of Creative Responses:**

*Unusual or humorous things that make someone happy, sad, etc.:*

“I would be happy to find the answers to my homework”;

“I would be happy to take a wrong turn and end up on the set of a movie”;

“I would be happy for my walk home to turn into a cartoon”;

“I would be scared that I would get lost and miss my favorite TV show”;

“Finding money on the ground would make me sad because someone lost it”;

“I would be scared that the walk was a dream and I woke up still in math class”;

“I would be scared that I would take too long and my Mom would think of more chores for me to do”;

“I would be happy to find a long-lost genie in a bottle”;

“I would be happy to take a wrong turn and end up at a One Direction concert.”

**NOTE:** If the team gives a response very similar to a previous one, count it as common. Do not ask team members to explain their answer, or to give a different response. You should ask a team member to repeat a response only if you did not hear it. Time continues.



# Scoresheet - Many Ways to Crack an Egg

Division: \_\_\_\_\_

Team or Coach: \_\_\_\_\_

Common	Creative	Highly Creative

Total Common \_\_\_\_\_

Total Creative \_\_\_\_\_ x 3 \_\_\_\_\_ +

Total Highly Creative \_\_\_\_\_ x 5 \_\_\_\_\_ +

Total points \_\_\_\_\_

## Score Sheet - Pool Party

Division \_\_\_\_\_ Team or coach \_\_\_\_\_

Common	Creative

Total Common \_\_\_\_\_

Total Creative \_\_\_\_\_ x 3 \_\_\_\_\_ +

Total points \_\_\_\_\_

# 2013 REGIONAL TOURNAMENT

## Hands-On Spontaneous Problem: Bundled Up

A. When the team members enter the room, tell them, "This is a hands-on problem. The five team members who will compete please step over to the competition area (indicate area). The others must sit quietly in these seats (indicate seats) and watch or leave the room. They cannot participate in any way."

**B. JUDGE READS TO TEAMS:** (Do not read material in parentheses.)

(1) You have 6 minutes to discuss the problem, practice, and create your solution. The judge will warn you when 2 minutes, when 1 minute, and when 30 seconds remain. You are allowed to ask the judges questions, but time will continue.

(2) There is string and scoring items on the table. **Your problem is to create as many bundles as possible using these items** (*point materials*). Nothing else can be used, and you are not allowed to damage items marked with a yellow label.

(3) **The item is considered bundled if there is more than one item bound together in some way and the grouping stays together when lifted up by a string** (*demonstrate*).

(4) **Each bundle must contain a different number of items.** For example, you can only have one bundle consisting of two items, one with three items, and so on. The string for lifting each bundle does not count as an item.

(5) **Each bundle must have a string attached for lifting.** The string does not count as an item in the bundle.

(6) You will be scored when time ends or when you ask to be scored. **A judge will lift each bundle by the string and count it. If items fall out of the bundle when picked up, that bundle will not count towards your score.**

(7) You will be scored as follows:

(a) You will receive 3 points per bundle.

(b) You will receive 1 to 15 points for the creativity of your solution.

(c) You will also receive 1 to 10 points for how well you work together.

(Repeat items in boldface. Begin by saying, "I repeat.")

### C. FOR JUDGES ONLY:

1. Discuss and practice the problem before the first team competes. Make any necessary decisions and/or notes. All decisions must be applied uniformly to all teams.

2. Practice reading the problem out loud before the first team competes. When reading to the teams, judges should illustrate the problem by indicating items and portraying actions.

3. Place two copies of the Team's Copy in full view of all team members before you read the problem to them. They may refer to them during the competition.

4. Before the team enters the room, place the following materials on a table:

1 plastic cup, 4-6 oz.

20 wooden toothpicks

2 rubber bands

6 plastic straws

2' of string

4 metal paper clips

10 Q-tips

4 pipe cleaners

1-12" sheet of aluminum foil

\*4 small rubber balls

\*1 pair of scissors

\* Mark with a yellow label.

\*\*It helps to put labels on the table listing each item and the quantity needed so it is easy to replace the items for the next team at a glance.

5. When a team asks to be scored or when time ends, instruct the team to leave their room then pick up each bundle and note it on the scoresheet. Be sure that each bundle contains a unique number of materials. For example, only one bundle can contain two objects, three objects, etc.

6. Be sure to give each team exactly 6 minutes to create their solution. Warn the team when 2 minutes, when 1 minute, and when 30 seconds remain.

7. When scoring **creativity of the solution**, assess use of materials, variety of ideas considered, and the final solution. When scoring **how well the team works together**, consider the extent that all team members are involved in developing the solution: Did the team delegate duties? share ideas?  
Did the team members value one another's input?

8. If it is obvious that the team does not understand the problem, you should provide information to clarify the problem's intent and its limitations. **Do not offer tips on how to solve the problem.**

## Individual Judge Spontaneous Scoresheet

Long Term Problem \_\_\_\_\_ Division I II III IV

Membership Name \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Number \_\_\_\_\_

Judge \_\_\_\_\_

Number of team members if FEWER than 5 \_\_\_\_\_

1. Creativity of team's solution (1-15 points) . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

2. How well team worked together (1-10 points) . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

3. Number of bundles . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ \*

\*Number should be the same for all judges

Scoring will be as follows:

2 points for every colored brick placed in the proper row and column

3 points for every white brick placed in the proper row and column

10 points if every red brick is placed in its proper place

15 points if every white brick is in its proper place

15 bonus points if there are no green bricks in your stack of bricks

20 bonus points for each blue brick that is replaced with a yellow brick of the same size

10 penalty points will be deducted from your team's score for any communication used other than a signal utilizing the signaling materials

0 to 20 points for how well your team works together

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Score will be as follows:

Each package that reaches its destination will receive 10 points

Each express mail package that reaches its destination in 1 minute will receive 15 additional points.

Creativity of how the airmail packages are moved 1-20

Creativity of how the land mail packages are moved 1-20

Teamwork 1-15

**A verbal hands-on spontaneous problem:** This is a two-part problem. In part 1, you will have 6 minutes to come up with a solution and practice. In part 2, you will have 4 minutes to present your solution to the judges.

Your problem is to create a skit about a news team giving breaking news and a weather report.

Your skit must contain the following

1. A news anchor
2. An original breaking news story (Example: Your team wins the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals).
3. An original commercial
4. A weather person
5. A weather report that includes a humorous weather event

There are materials for you to use in your news report. No other materials can be used.

You may portray your news anchor and weather person in any way you like.

Score will be as follows:

Quality of the presentation 1-15

Creativity of the news anchor 1-10

Creativity of the breaking news 1-15

Quality of the commercial 1-10

Quality of the weather person's report 1-15

Creativity of the humorous weather event 1-10

Creative use of the provided materials 1-10

Teamwork 1-15

For Judges Only:

Give the team a variety of materials to use in their newscast. Provide 15-20 items. Go for variety, but make sure they are items that would be useful to the team. Examples: Socks, Shoes, watering can, soup can, paper plates, paper cups, a variety of clothing items, etc