

Tournament Day

A Primer for Parents

Tournament Day is a special day for an Odyssey of the Mind team. It is the culmination of months of hard work. The team has planned their solution, tried ideas, failed, redesigned, and finally completed the requirements. They are likely to be both excited and nervous as competition day approaches.

As loving parents, it is natural that you want what is best for your child. You naturally care how they do and want everything to be perfect. This sheet is for you, to let you know what to expect and to help you support your child on the day of the tournament.

What to expect (and what not to expect):

- *Don't* expect perfection from anything you see, be it judges, teams or other parents.
- *Don't* expect everything to go flawlessly. Murphy loves Odyssey of the Mind tournaments.
- *Do* expect things to need fixing and updating and give your children the space to do that **on their own**.
- *Do* understand that judges, coaches, other teams and other parents all want the best for your children.
- *Do* expect that judges will want to talk to the team after the performance. This is normal. *Don't* move in with your congratulations until the judges are done.

Some things you should be sure to do:

- *Do* say "thank you" to the tournament volunteers.
- *Do* say "thank you" to the coach.
- *Do* congratulate your children, and support them emotionally, but give them the space to be alone with their teammates before and after performance time.
- *Do* help your children unload things from the car.
- *Do* help your children remove items from the performance area when they are finished with the judges.

Some things you should not do:

- *Don't* talk to the judges, except to say, "Thank You". Leave all other interactions with judges to the coach and the team.
- *Don't* help your children move anything into the performance area.
- *Don't* help with costumes or make-up.
- *Don't* give advice on anything relating to the problem solution, even the smallest thing.
- *Don't* repair anything! If something breaks, the team must repair it, **even if you broke it!**

A word about success and winning in the program

By the time teams have made it to the tournament, **they have already succeeded and won**. They have taken on a problem and solved it on their own. This constitutes success in Odyssey of the Mind. Our teams may win or they may lose. They may get first place or they may get last. In any case, they have accomplished their goal and solved their problem. They deserve respect and sincere congratulations for their hard work and dedication.

Never utter the phrase "It's all right, honey" to an upset team. *Don't* subscribe to any critical thoughts they have. Your children will look to you and their coach for another point of view. Let your words define their success. If they failed, acknowledge the failure and congratulate them for their hard work and dedication.

Praise the team for their accomplishments, encourage them to improve upon their failures, and encourage them to judge based on a year of hard work. Odyssey of the Mind participants cannot help but compare themselves to what they see, but remind them that they learned a lot this year and encourage them to learn more from tournament day. What they will remember about Odyssey of the Mind is a year of fun meetings; *don't* let the tournament change that.