

Odyssey of the Mind

is an international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. Odyssey of the Mind has its roots in the Industrial Design classes of Dr. Sam Micklus, Odyssey of the Mind founder. As a professor at Rowan University in New Jersey (formerly Glassboro State College) Dr. Micklus challenged his students to create vehicles without wheels, mechanical pie throwers and flotation devices that would take them across a course on a lake. He evaluated them not on the success of their solutions, but on the ingenuity applied and the risk involved in trying something new and different.

The idea spread, and now students form teams, where members apply their creativity to solve problems that range from building mechanical devices to presenting their own interpretation of literary classics. They then bring their solutions to competition on the local, state, and World level. Thousands of teams from throughout the U.S. and from about 25 other countries participate in the program.

Odyssey of the Mind Problems

The problems are designed for competition, with scoring components and limitations, or rules to be followed. The long-term problems change every year. They fall into five general categories. These are mechanical/vehicle, technical performance, classics, structure and performance.

Mechanical/Vehicle

Teams design, build and operate vehicles of various size and with various power sources. Sometimes they drive the vehicles, and sometimes the vehicles perform tasks, such as overcoming obstacles or visiting other "countries" to retrieve artifacts.

Classics

The theme of this problem is based on the classical -- from literature to architecture to art. Whether it's writing an additional chapter to Moby Dick or bringing paintings to life, it's always a terrific learning experience.

Performance

In this problem, teams present performances that revolve around a specific theme and incorporate required elements. Past themes include "morphing" objects, animals that express human emotions, and originating folktales.

Structure

Teams design and build structures, using only balsa wood and glue. They test them by supporting and holding as much weight as possible -- sometimes more than a thousand pounds! Teams usually present a skit as part of the Style presentation.

Technical Performance

Teams make innovative contraptions and incorporate artistic elements into their solutions. They might be asked to write an original musical score to play on a "new" type of instrument, or to build a robot with human characteristics, or to perform tasks using a chain reaction of snapping mousetraps.

Spontaneous Problems

These brain testers are really brain builders! They can be used in 10- to 30-minute sessions. Some spontaneous problems build verbal skills, some build mechanical skills, and some build both, but all will improve your creative problem-solving talents. Get a group of friends together and compete, or solve them without keeping score.

[Spontaneous problem summaries](#)

University Academy began Odyssey of the Mind in 2012-13, worked in class on Spontaneous Problems, and formed teams this year to participate in the tournament. The students in 3rd-5th grades created their problem responses by working together after school, supported by Odyssey Coaches. The teams presented at the Regional Tournament this month.

University Academy teams placed in the Regional Tournament:
Problem 2: "Experiencing Technical Difficulties" - 1st Place
Problem 5: "Silent Movie" - 1st Place
Problem 3: "Pandora's Box" - 5th Place

UA Odyssey Leader for 2014-15 is Amanda Walker and Team Coaches are Sarah Davis,
The teams will travel to Orlando for the State Tournament in April.

Attached is the video compilation from last year's state tournament that shows all the fun. There are also YouTube videos from year's past showing problems. The teams from Port St. Joe high school have gone to World Finals. University Academy students in Odyssey of the Mind Regionals all came into watch them Saturday and were amazed!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6x9W8hMP4aM>

To learn more, place these links in the browser:

<http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/>

<http://floridaodysseyofthemind.org/>

<http://www.emeraldcoastodyssey.org/>