

Particularly Primary

Primary coaches often ask, "Since this division is non-competitive, why should we worry about the rules and forms and such?" The answer lies in the entire purpose of the Primary Division: this is an age for learning about Odyssey and learning the process. Also, as a matter of practicality, coaching is actually easier if you are familiar with all the procedures and methods described in this handbook.

Forms are officially optional for primary, but our region recommends their use. It would be good to have the team at least become familiar with them. Not only will they need to know about them if they advance to Division I, but the forms can help point out the overall process to the team.

Scores are not given to primary, but are in the problem. Why? Because the scores can help a team plan its time and decide what they need to do. Also, the team may wish to "score themselves" at a rehearsal, just to see how they think they are doing. Remember, this is about learning and feeling good about problem solving. Scores can help with that process.

Feedback in the form of comment sheets will be given to primary teams and their coaches at the tournament.

Spontaneous will be offered to primary teams at our regional tournament, right after the Long Term performance. In fact, Primary Spontaneous is a very special experience, with a special problem created just for this year's teams!

Spontaneous thinking is a fundamental ability in creative problem solving. A team has FUN with spontaneous, and may not even realize they are learning to work together, to analyze problems, to think divergently, and to take risks. Whether someone is 5 or 55, spontaneous problem solving teaches a way of thinking that we can all use in our lives every day. Let the primary teams have fun with spontaneous ... just adapt the problems for their age level!

Meetings should be adapted to the age level. It is unlikely that a group of Kindergarten-age students will want to work at any given task for an hour! Plan your meetings accordingly. Enlist the aid of parents, if necessary, to allow the team to work in several small groups.

Expectations should also be adjusted for the age level. Don't expect primary teams to invent cold fusion in a bottle, or paint like Degas! And, even more important, don't allow the parents to expect the team to have the polish and expertise that the team would have if the PARENTS were helping solve the problem!! Sometimes it is difficult for parents to understand that a tree painted pink is OK! This is about learning, not about perfection. (And who said a tree couldn't be pink, anyway??)

Penalties are not given to primary teams, since they receive no scores!! However, good behavior is certainly expected, and parents could be asked to remove a child from the tournament if the behavior is totally unacceptable. (It never is ... these teams are very excited to be participating!)

FUN and LEARNING should be the primary focus of primary team (and for all teams.) This is not a competition for them, and everyone should relax and enjoy the showcase of the talent of these young teams!