



HOW DO I START Odyssey of the Mind™ AT MY SCHOOL?

There is *no one, correct, answer* to this question. Each school and school system has its own guidelines for clubs and organizations, its own degree of faculty involvement, and its own approach to Odyssey of the Mind™. Each Virginia Region has its own procedures and offers various support and services. Some school districts give financial support, and some do not. However, the following steps are some you might consider in getting started:

1. **Talk to the principal about the goals and values of Odyssey of the Mind™.** Get approval for this extra-curricular activity. Find out whether the county or city school system already sponsors the program. Explain what might be required in terms of sending flyers home, having a meeting for interested parents and students, enlisting a faculty sponsor (if you are a parent and not a faculty member), and perhaps soliciting teachers to judge at the Regional Tournament.
2. **Contact the Regional Director to be sure the local Odyssey region has you on their mailing list.** (You will receive training and tournament information from your region.) Find out what costs there are at the state and regional level for participation. Attend the Regional Coordinator's Meeting in the fall, if your region hosts one. (Regional contacts are on the website at <http://va.odysseyofthemind.org>)
3. **Financing:**
 - a. If the program is not financed by the school district, examine methods of financing with the school principal. Determine who might finance the \$135 membership fee and whether any funds might be available to pay tournament fees, coaches' training fees, state membership fees, etc. (if your region or state assesses these). Consider charging each participant a minimal fee of \$5-\$10 to put in a club treasury to cover these costs.
 - b. Talk to the PTA/PTSA president about Odyssey of the Mind™. If the funds are not available from the principal but he or she approves, ask the PTA for funding. Send in the membership application now or wait until you see if enough people are interested in the fall. (Packets with the rules and problems are mailed the end of August/first of September. If you do not send in money until September or later, it will take 3-4 weeks to get the packet back after you mail your application.)
4. **Determine who will be the "School Coordinator"** to help form teams and disseminate information to coaches and teams.
5. **In September or October, invite interested parents, students and teachers to an Awareness Meeting to tell them about Odyssey of the Mind™ and how to form teams.** The information about this meeting can be sent by flyer, PTA newsletter and/or announcements over the PA system. You may wish to distribute additional information (program overview, problem synopses) at the meeting. You might have a sample Spontaneous problem for the kids (or parents!) to try.
6. **Recruit coaches** by explaining a team cannot be formed without a coach. (Some schools have had much success by requiring that each team parent have some responsibility, either as coach, assistant, team volunteer, spontaneous coach, etc.)
7. **Have students sign up** and juggle their interests, ages, and available coaches to form teams. (Some schools have try-outs either to limit the number of teams or to determine commitment on the part of students. Some schools have other methods of selection. Ideally, all interested students should have the opportunity to participate!!)
8. **Provide initial support to coaches** by giving information about training, copies of the rules and of the problems, and a copy of your school's membership card. Make sure you are on the Regional Director's mailing list!