



Why Creative Problem Solving?

From mastering fire to inventing the wheel to creating apps for modern devices, mankind has advanced because humans are naturally curious and inherently creative. These traits lead to innovation. Creative and critical thinking allow us to not only solve problems, but also to identify needs that can be served. Odyssey of the Mind (OotM) rewards participants for being curious and creative. **In OotM, teams take many individual ideas and thoughts and work together to form superior solutions.**

Participants succeed in life because OotM teaches the Creative Problem Solving Process: Identify the problem, brainstorm ideas, evaluate the ideas, choose the best idea, then develop and evaluate it. The Odyssey education is in learning the process of solving new problems using creativity and knowledge.

In OotM we recognize that curiosity and original thinking should be nurtured. History is filled with countless discoveries and innovations that were made by individuals who thought differently and followed their creative and curious instincts. OotM teaches how to apply these instincts in a productive and forward-thinking way.

As a result, participants become scientists, engineers, artists, actors, doctors and more who will be prepared to identify and solve any type of problems that may arise in their future.



“Access to **talented and creative** people is to modern business what access to coal and iron ore was to steel-making.”

— Richard Florida

“Traditional thinking is all about “what is.” **Future thinking** will also need to be about **what can be.**”

— Edward de Bono

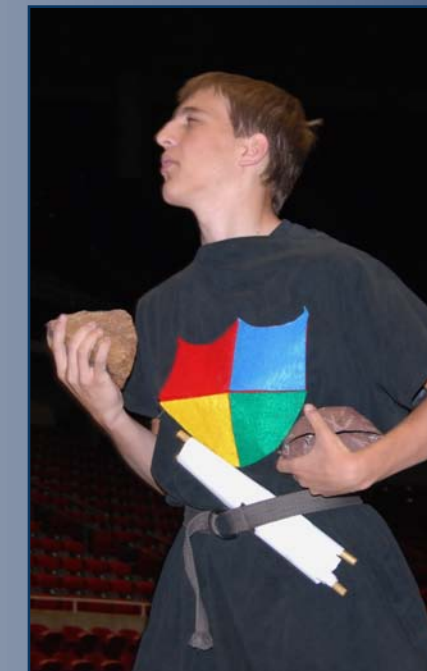
Why Odyssey of the Mind?

Odyssey problems have challenged students to design mechanical dinosaurs, invent new factory machinery, build working vehicles, write a new chapter to Moby Dick, put a twist on classic artworks, turn Pandora’s Box into a video game, and much more.

Since 1978, Odyssey of the Mind problems have challenged students to go beyond conventional thinking and incorporate creativity in education. **Many companies have recognized the powerful lessons Odyssey of the Mind teaches students: IBM, Microsoft and NASA are just a few that have worked with and sponsored OotM over the years.** From the start, OotM recognized the importance of many of the skills highlighted in education today. From the beginning, we have emphasized and rewarded Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. We also realize the importance of studying history and art and have encouraged this through our *Classics* problems and the drama and music components emphasized in our performance problems.

All OotM solutions require students to perform, not just the sciences, but they all incorporate the arts as well – whether it be set-building, costume-making, creating props, acting, singing, or playing an instrument. These skills are important to create a balanced education in any time period. They also make learning fun and bring together kids with varying interests that often form life-long friendships.

For more than thirty years Odyssey of the Mind has been blazing the trail in the field of creativity in education. Today, students who join OotM will discover that students from countries all around the world who speak different languages and live in cultures much different from their own share an interest in solving problems using creativity.



Isn't Odyssey just for smart kids?

OotM benefits students at all learning-levels. There are skills and talents that are not always recognized by standardized testing or able to develop in a normal classroom setting — topics like mechanics, art, experimentation, or playing an instrument. These students often get discouraged and do not have the opportunity to approach their true potential.

All of the ideas and work in developing the solution to OotM problems must come from the team members. As a result, participants learn the importance of communication and team-building. Gifted students thrive in OotM, but so do students who perform at all other levels in the classroom. By removing limits, real or implied, we allow students to approach their true potential. In Odyssey of the Mind we never say, “I can’t”, we say, “It might be difficult, but I’ll find a way!”

Students at all levels become excited about education because they are allowed to take a hands-on approach to learning. They can see what they have learned and achieve the self-appreciation that comes from successfully applying their learning in the real world. Part of OotM’s success is the result of encouraging students to incorporate their interests into their solutions. No matter how scientific, technical, or artistic, the subjects that excite them become a part of their learning.

Creative problem solving knows no age, no class level, nor a grade. It is a natural skill that can and should be nurtured and strengthened.



“Education is not the learning of facts, but the **training of the mind to think.**”

— Albert Einstein

Beyond the Box

Knowing there are many possible solutions to problems is important for students going forward in all areas of life. Having new ideas, or improving old ones, is a valuable skill in every career path. In Odyssey of the Mind, students learn to successfully use their creative ideas. They also recognize that most limits to achievement are self-imposed. A great inventor and leader in human-powered flight, Dr. Paul MacCready, once defined creative problem solving as “Getting the job done.” In other words, find a way to solve the problem with the resources you have.

OotM students don’t just think outside the box, they think beyond the box. “Out of the Box thinking” means not being limited to established ideas. However, there is a great deal of knowledge that continues to prove useful in many ways. **Beyond the Box thinking teaches students to use all of their knowledge and learning as a springboard to develop solutions to problems.**

Some great solutions are those that are in place and accepted, or, as you might say, “In the Box.” They also could be improved by those who are taught to use creative problem-solving. OotM is solution-oriented. As a result, participants become self-motivated and learn to explore many possible solutions using their creativity, originality, and knowledge. They then convert those ideas into successful solutions.

...And Beyond!

Oodyssey’s grassroots appeal has continued through the years. As former participants become leaders in their fields, they realize Odyssey’s impact, and in turn, encourage their children to participate in the program. Many former participants also stay with the program as a volunteer.

OotM has been developing unique open-ended problems for over 35 years that teach people to be creative. Odyssey works with experts in various fields to ensure the problems engage students while emphasizing important educational standards. The program continues to be a small family-run business that relies on a volunteer network from around the world – creating one large, creative, and fun-loving worldwide Odyssey family!

In an increasingly technical world, entrepreneurs are becoming more common and companies are succeeding by hiring innovators and risk takers. The gauges used to measure the likelihood of success have been turned upside down. **While working Beyond the Box, Odyssey students develop lifelong skills that include learning to work with others, being comfortable speaking in public, independent-study, artistic expression, and science, math & technology education.** More importantly, they learn that it is worth taking risks and that there are methods they can use to increase the likelihood of the success in their risk-taking.