



Odyssey of the Mind®  
The beyond the box experience.



# Problem 5 Performance

Problem No. 5:

Life is a Circus!



# Life is a Circus!

Problem No. 5: Divisions: I, II, III & IV

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## A. The Problem

Sometimes life seems like a circus! Teams will create a humorous performance about a young person character living in a regular world that realizes they are in a circus world – mid-act! There are original animals performing tricks as part of circus acts, a clown, and a ringmaster that announces the activities. The young person returns to the regular world thinking it was all a dream until they see a mysterious figure that turns out to be from the circus world.

The **Creative Emphases** of the problem are on the performance, the circus world, how the animal tricks are performed, and the portrayal of the ringmaster.

The **Spirit of the Problem** is to create an original humorous performance about a character living a regular life that wakes up to find they are in a circus world as part of a circus act! The circus world will have a minimum of two original animals performing tricks, a clown, circus acts and a ringmaster announcer. The young person returns to the regular world thinking it was just a dream until they see someone from the circus world.

## B. Limitations

1. **General Rules:** Read the *2021-22 Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide*. This manual is updated each year and includes important rules for solving Odyssey of the Mind problems and forms required for competition. This problem cannot be solved without referring to the **Program Rules** section of the guide.
2. **Problem Clarifications:** The *Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide* explains the types of questions that will be clarified and how to submit them. Problem clarifications can be submitted and accessed at [www.odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications](http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications). The deadline for submission is February 15, 2022. CCI may find it necessary to issue clarifications after that date, so continue to check for them after February 15 and before each competition.
3. The **time limit** for this problem is 8 minutes. This starts when the Timekeeper says, "Team begin," and includes setup, Style, and the presentation of the solution. A one minute overtime is allowed for this problem but penalty E6 will be assessed (points are still awarded for scored elements).
4. The **cost limit** for this problem is \$125 (U.S.). The combined value of all materials used during the presentation of the solution, including Style, cannot exceed this amount. The Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide explains the cost limit and how to determine the value of the materials used.
5. The team will create an original humorous performance that includes:
  - a. a young person character.
  - b. at least two scenes depicting the regular world.
  - c. at least one scene depicting a circus world.
  - d. two original animals performing different tricks.
  - e. a clown character.
  - f. circus acts.
  - g. a ringmaster character that announces the circus acts.
  - h. the young person thinking it was a dream until seeing a mysterious figure from the circus.
  - i. five Style elements including two that are chosen by the team listed in F. Style.
6. The **young person character:**
  - a. may be portrayed as anything and in any way the team wishes but must meet the requirements of being a character.
  - b. will be considered young *as portrayed in the performance*.
  - c. will realize that it somehow left its regular world and is in a circus world. The moving from one world to the other does not have to be portrayed in the performance, but it can be.
  - d. will be part of a circus act mid-performance when entering the circus world.

7. The **scenes depicting the regular world:**

- a. may be anything the team wishes and will be the regular world as it is *portrayed in the performance*.
- b. will show what life is like for the young person character in its regular world before being in the circus world.
- c. will show the young person in the regular world after it was in the circus world. The young person character is allowed to make multiple visits to the circus world but it must return to the regular world after it has visited the circus world at least one time.

8. The **circus world:**

- a. can be anything the team wishes and will be considered a circus as it is portrayed in the performance.
- b. is where the scored circus characters and elements take place in the performance. Anything that occurs in a regular world setting will not count toward the score for the required circus elements.
- c. should be recognizably different from the regular world. This can be done through setting, costuming, or anything that makes the two look different to the judges and audience.

9. The **two required original animals:**

- a. must be original creations of the team. They cannot represent any animal known to exist or to have existed. They may have physical characteristics of existing animals. There can be additional animals, but only two will be scored.
- b. can be portrayed any way but must be tangible creations.
- c. will each perform one trick as part of a required circus act. The tricks must be different from each other. Each animal trick must include one task from the following list:
  - (1) Change the shape or size of something. This may be anything the team wishes.
  - (2) Turn something over so it comes to rest upside down.
  - (3) Assemble something. There must be at least 3 parts that are assembled into one.
  - (4) Division I only – change its color or the color of something else.
  - (5) Divisions II, III and IV only – Make something disappear and reappear somewhere else.

10. The **clown character:**

- a. may be portrayed any way the team wishes but must meet the requirements of being a character; however, the clown is not allowed to talk when performing in character.
- b. can be anything the team wishes; it will be considered a clown as portrayed in the performance.
- c. will entertain the circus audience in a humorous manner. This can be done during or in between circus acts. The team does not have to include a circus audience, but it may. To do this the clown must at some time:
  - (1) make something seem to appear from nowhere.
  - (2) perform an illusion.
  - (3) use an object to make a sound at least three times.

11. The **circus acts:**

- a. are three separate acts required for score. The team can include more, but only three will be scored.
- b. includes the one taking place when the young person realizes it's in a circus world.
- c. includes two where the original animals perform tricks as described in B9. The tricks are only part of these acts. The team must add one or more additional elements to make these circus acts.

12. The **ringmaster character:**

- a. must be portrayed by a team member.
- b. will announce the circus acts.

13. The **mysterious figure** that turns out to be from the circus world:
  - a. will appear at or near the end of the 8-minute performance in a scene depicting the regular world.
  - b. cannot be the ringmaster or the clown characters.
  - c. must be noticed by the young person. The young person will think the circus world was a dream until it sees the mysterious figure.
  - d. can be portrayed in any way but must be noticeable to the judges and audience.
  
14. The team should present the Staging Area Judge with four copies of the Team List Form found in the forms section at [www.odysseyofthemind.com/members](http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/members) or four copies of a list on one side of one or two sheets of 8 ½" x 11" or A4 paper. This list can be hand-printed, typed, or computer generated. It is for reference only. This list must include:
  - a. the team's membership name and number, the problem and division.
  - b. a brief description to identify the young person character and the circus act it wakes up being part of.
  - c. a brief description to identify the regular world and the circus world.
  - d. a brief description to identify the two original animals, the tricks, and the order the tricks will occur.
  - e. a brief description to identify the clown character.
  - f. a brief description to identify the three circus acts, how the tricks are incorporated, and the order they will occur.
  - g. a brief description to identify the ringmaster character.
  - h. a brief description to identify the mysterious figure from the circus world.
  - i. the signal the team will use to indicate it has finished its performance.

### C. Site, Setup and Competition

1. A stage or floor area a minimum 7' x 10' (2.1m x 3m) will be used, but a larger area is desirable. This will not be marked. Teams must be prepared to perform in a 7' x 10' area. If space permits, the team may perform and/or place equipment, props, etc. outside the 7' x 10' area. If a drop-off exists beyond the 7' x 10' dimensions, a caution line may be taped 30" (76.2 cm) from the edge of the drop-off. This will serve as a warning, not a boundary.
2. A three-prong electrical outlet will be available at the performance area. Teams must bring their own extension cords and adapters, if needed.
3. The team members should report to the competition site with all items for the presentation of their solution at least 15 minutes before they are scheduled to compete.
4. It is the team's responsibility to complete its problem solution within the 8-minute time limit. When the team is finished, it must signal the judges. An overtime penalty will be assessed if the team takes more than 8 minutes, and the Timekeeper will stop the team after one minute of overtime.
5. Teams should bring cleaning utensils to clean up any mess. Should a team take an unreasonable amount of time to clean the site, or leave a mess, the judges will assess an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty. Others not on the team's roster can help the team clear the site and remove the team's props. The competition area must be left clean and dry for the next competing team.

### D. Scoring

1. Creativity of the overall performance (originality, effectiveness)..... 4 to 20 points
2. Overall quality of the presentation ..... 4 to 20 points
3. The young person character..... 4 to 25 points
  - a. realizes it is in a circus act mid-performance..... 0 or 5 points
  - b. impact of its portrayal on the performance .....4 to 20 points

4. The scenes depicting the regular world..... 3 to 15 points
    - a. show the young person character in the regular world as required ..... 0 or 5 points
    - b. how well they are incorporated into the performance .....3 to 10 points
  5. Creativity of how the circus world is portrayed as a circus ..... 4 to 20 points
  6. The original animals ..... 8 to 40 points
    - a. animal 1 .....4 to 20 points
      - (1) originality .....2 to 8 points
      - (2) performs one trick from the list in B9c ..... 0 or 5 points
      - (3) creativity of how the trick is performed .....2 to 7 points
    - b. animal 2 .....4 to 20 points
      - (1) originality .....2 to 8 points
      - (2) performs one trick from the list in B9c ..... 0 or 5 points
      - (3) creativity of how the trick is performed .....2 to 7 points
  7. The clown character ..... 3 to 15 points
    - a. entertains the audience including actions from the list in B10c. .... 0 or 5 points
    - b. the clown’s overall humor .....3 to 10 points
  8. The circus acts ..... 3 to 25 points
    - a. three acts are presented as required..... 0 or 5 points
    - b. overall creativity of their portrayal ..... 1 to 10 points
    - c. impact on the performance .....2 to 10 points
  9. The ringmaster character ..... 3 to 15 points
    - a. announces the acts..... 0 or 5 points
    - b. creativity of its portrayal (all aspects including appearance and behavior).....3 to 10 points
  10. The young person character sees the mysterious figure from the circus world in the regular world..... 0 or 5 points
- Maximum possible: 200 points*

## E. Penalties

1. “Spirit of the Problem” violation (each offense) .....-1 to -30 points
2. Unsportsmanlike conduct (each offense) .....-1 to -30 points
3. Missing membership sign or wrong team/problem/division .....-1 to -5 points
4. Outside assistance (each offense) .....-1 to -25 points
5. Over cost limit.....-1 to -30 points
6. Over time limit: .....-5 points for every 10 seconds or fraction thereof over 8 minutes  
(For example: 27 seconds = -15 points) maximum -30 points

*Teams that don’t present a scored element of the problem (see D. Scoring) will not receive a penalty, they will receive a zero score for that category.*

## F. Style (Elaboration of the problem solution; use four copies of the Style Form from the 2021-22 Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide)

1. Originality of an object the clown character uses to make the required sounds..... 1 to 10 points
  2. Creative use of materials in any circus performer’s costume other than the required animals ..... 1 to 10 points
  3. (Free choice of team) ..... 1 to 10 points
  4. (Free choice of team) ..... 1 to 10 points
  5. Overall effect of the four Style elements in the performance..... 1 to 10 points
- Maximum possible: 50 points*

## G. Tournament Director Will Provide

1. 7' x 10' (2.1m x 3m) presentation area (larger, if possible).
2. A three-prong electrical outlet at the performance area.
3. A judging team and materials necessary to judge this problem.

**NOTE:** Contact your Tournament Director for site specifications, such as actual dimensions, floor surface, etc. Do not submit a clarification request for this information.

## H. The Team Must Provide

1. Four copies of its Style Form, one Cost Form, one Outside Assistance Form, and all team-specific clarifications.
2. Four copies of the Team List. This list is to assist the judges. If the team fails to provide the list, there will be no penalty; however, it benefits the team to have the lists because without them the judges might miss a scored aspect of the performance.
3. Any necessary extension cords or outlet adapters.
4. Cleanup materials as needed.

Problem by Dr. C. Samuel Micklus and Samuel W. Micklus

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This problem is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Harold Kurtz. During his long tenure as a volunteer, Harold took on many roles within Odyssey of the Mind, Creative Opportunities Unlimited, and both PA and NJ OotM. While his roles grew over the 35+ years he volunteered for Odyssey of the Mind — from board member, Association Director, Master of Ceremonies at World Finals Graduation and so much more — one thing remained constant: his passion for creativity in education and his role as a Head Judge for Problem 5! Harold always kept the team members and his judging teams first. He was a Spirit Award recipient and made an impact on a countless number of students around the world. He will be greatly missed in Problem 5 and the entire Odyssey of the Mind community. May his love for family, kids, and Odyssey of the Mind shine through this year as OM teams celebrate Life As a Circus! Thank you Harold.

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