

What is spontaneous?

Spontaneous is a problem presented on the spot, with no advance “warning” as to what the problem is, or what it is like.

Spontaneous problems are presented when a team enters the spontaneous competition room. The only people allowed in the room are the judges and the team. No parents. No coaches.

Spontaneous requires that teams think creatively on the spot, and without a great deal of time to ponder. Practicing spontaneous problems teaches the team basic methods they can use to come up with divergent solutions to a problem. These brainstorming skills can be used not only on competition day, but in many problem-solving situations that require divergent solutions. Experience with these skills is required in order to effectively solve spontaneous problems.

On competition day, teams are scored three ways: 1) their solution to a long-term problem on which they have spent many months working (0-200 points); 2) Style, the elaboration of the long-term solution (0-50 points); and 3) on their solution to a spontaneous problem given to them on the spot (0-100 points).

Some spontaneous problems require hands-on work and others require verbal responses. All demand teamwork and quick thinking.

Types of spontaneous problems.....

Verbal problems have teams responding to a prompt using only words. Verbal problems have a typical set of rules. Give the team members one minute to think about their answers. Then give them three minutes to answer. Common answers are given a score of one point. Creative answers are awarded five points.

Hands-on Spontaneous problems require team members to use various items to create a final solution. A list of materials needed is given before each problem. A scoring system is also given. Teams may be given specific items and instructed to build a tower, a bridge, a small vehicle, for example, and then also be scored on how high the tower is, or how much weight it will hold. Vehicles may be required to go through an obstacle course, or cross a team-created bridge. Just have the teams prepared for anything.

Verbal-Hands-On problems combine the features of both verbal and hands-on qualities. Teams often must use and respond to various objects. Typical problems include creating a story using various objects or creating a sales pitch for some object. They may be required to build something out of materials given to the team and then tell a story or make up a song about it. Just have them prepared in many different venues.

Spontaneous should be fun and the more fun you make your practices, the more at ease teams will feel at the competition. Spontaneous is not something to be scared of, it is a portion of the competition that students should be prepared for. If given a lot of preparation opportunities, teams will feel more at ease on competition day.