

IC Tips to improve IC scores

MATERIALS – Take one meeting and just play with materials. Build a tower out of just paper. Can you make a tube without any fasteners? What's the best way to rip paper? Paper can stabilize a tower by holding legs together. Do the same types of things for common IC materials. The more familiar the kids are with how to use them the better they will succeed in IC.

TEAM WORK SCORES start as soon as they enter the room. Have the kids come in with enthusiasm and even a catch phrase or team cheer. Remind them to act enthusiastically during the whole time and say thank you to the appraisers as they leave. Leave a good impression with the appraisers.

ASSIGN JOBS – It works! The appraisers are looking for the roles in teamwork, not everyone can be the leader, someone should worry about time and the rules. During practice have everyone try all the different roles during the season. Have the team assign roles just before the tournament based on who they think is best in each role. Teams often have one facilitator (HINT! not the leader or boss) for hands on tasks and another for performance based challenges.

CREATIVE USE OF MATERIALS – If there isn't a score for this don't try to use weird things. Just get the job done with the most points. If Creative use of materials is scored, think way outside the box on a few things but make sure you still complete the task. Creative uses are using a paperclip in a new way the appraisers haven't seen before ie. Connecting 2 straws together by opening the clip into an S shape and sticking both ends into straws. Practice different ways to use materials with kids.

RULE OF THREE. If your team (like mine did) tends to keep going on suggesting new and better ideas long after they should have chosen something and started solving or writing the skit or building; have them use the rule of three. That is, for the first decision, listen to the first 3 ideas. The fourth person takes one of those 3 ideas and adds on to it. (They don't have to go 1, 2, 3 in order in a circle; it's whoever had the first three ideas. Then choose one, add to it and move on.) It's great to have all 7 kids make suggestions if they do it quickly, but the Rule of Three helps with a team where each child loves only his/her own ideas and therefore keeps making suggestions. It helps speed up the process.

ACT THE PART. After the first couple practices, run the ICs as though it is Competition. In other words, the clock is ticking, introduce them like a team is introduced & talk to them as an appraiser (of course, a kind, gentle, welcoming appraiser) would talk to them. Answer questions that you think an appraiser would answer and direct them to the written paper if the correct answer is "what does the challenge say? if it doesn't say you can't, then you can." Don't give them more time the first time they see a challenge. After failing have them try again and see if they can finish in time.

CODE WORDS aka Getting Stuck.

- **Team Member code word:** Many teams have come up with special words for each team member to use if they are absolutely stuck for ideas. [Write down some silly words and then randomly pull them out to create each kid's phrase ie. "stinky yellow toe-jam" and "alien purple tomatoes." When a kid gets stuck for an answer, he would say "stinky yellow toe-jam" or some part of his special phrase, so the team could go on. It is rarely used in competition, but is a secret weapon for kids to know they would always have at least one answer, no matter what. Sort of a silly safety net. [hint: you should ask them to say it once every meeting, or they will forget it! At some point, say "code word?" and the first kid to say his special phrase gets an M&M or whatever.]
- **Team code word:** this is a catch-all phrase to politely remind team members when they are getting off track in an IC. It can mean they are off the focus of the challenge, or they are stuck in a rut, or they are starting to argue. When a team member cheerfully offers this phrase, it is a code word for "Okay, let's move on, we are wasting time." One team chose "Got Milk?" as their catch phrase. When they are in the thinking/planning stage and two kids are getting testy and not giving in to each other's ideas, a third kid pops in with "got milk?" and it's a mental clue that they have lost focus in solving the challenge.

REPETITION. It is GOOD IDEA to do the same IC again – even if they nailed it the first time, tell them to do it again. But it must be different than the last time they did it. This allows them to work on different approaches to the same challenge and increases experience in attempting different

EVALUATION. After each practice, create a non-threatening evaluation and creative criticism session. Say, "you made me laugh when..." and "I liked it when..." and "could you think of anything else you might have done?" "what was your favorite part of the solution?" and "how would you do the challenge if you didn't have [item]?" ... ask probing questions and give lots of strokes. Encourage them to prompt & encourage each other. If a lightbulb moment strikes during the debrief, ask them to do the IC again with the good idea in mind. Use the list of debrief questions to guide the discussion.

VARIETY. When you practice ICs, try to alternate types, such as performance, hands-on, verbal, hybrid, so they are ready with anything. You CAN participate in these - it's NOT interference. Feedback on ICs isn't interference either, so have some fun. If they need a little shake-up, participate and be as silly and creative as you want your team to be and see where it goes. I often participate in the pass-around warm-ups (passing around an item, such as a cup, a pipe cleaner, a washcloth, a banana, a sponge, a shoe... whatever) and using it in an impromptu manner. Since you know what the item is, you have a head start at wacky answers, so give yourself a little think time and be especially clever to impress the kids.

SKIT-DEVELOPMENT. One thing I have done that has helped kids work well under pressure is to have them practice, totally apart from any formal IC problem, creating a beginning, a middle and an end of a story/skit. Make cards with odd phrases, character traits, items, a short scenario, etc.. on them and break the kids up into two groups of three each, give each group a few cards with different elements on them. Have them go off for just a few minutes and then report back with a short skit incorporating all the items. The skit must include a beginning, a middle and an end (as my kids say a "Boffo!!" ending).

These short skits have become the building blocks of their IC performances. They learn how to work together in small groups, working quickly and incorporating a variety of elements.

Another good idea is to have the kids develop some favorite characters and places. It saves time having to come up with new ideas if they are stuck. In the past my teams would love to rhyme their lines, make up songs and silly dances and always added one of these into their IC.

IMPROV. I would also recommend doing a lot of improvisational games. They learn to think quickly (or what to do if they aren't particularly fast thinkers), to create interesting characters, and how to move their bodies around in interesting and humorous ways. There are many online sites with improv games.