

## **Team Choice Elements**

Team Choice Elements (sometimes called Side Trips) are often 40% of the team's total score. They are a great way for the team to show off their talents, and do something which isn't prescribed by the challenge. Here are some thoughts on how teams can build great team choice elements to complement the rest of their solution.

### **The Icing on the Cake**

The team choice elements are like the icing on the cake. They are the delicious extra that sets off the main course! Team choice elements give team members the chance to “show off” their special abilities and talents for the appraisers. This is the part of the competition that lets the team choose two things they would like to be scored on.

The team choice elements can be anything that is not a required element of the Central Challenge and that can be scored as a separate item. I have seen teams choose many different team choice elements.

### **Costume Example**

While we talk about costumes here, there are many other examples that are similar

- The costume of a specific character.
- The costumes of the female cast members and how natural materials were used.
- The costumes of all cast members.

The difference here is that as the scope of the team choice element is broadened, the appraiser must look at more items to give the score. If some items in the group are not as creative or well-made as others, then the score might be less because the appraiser would have to take into account all of the items. If one costume is truly creative and well made, it might be better to choose that one costume instead of choosing all costumes. If all the costumes are creative and well-made than the team might score better.

### **Props Example**

The team may designate as a team choice element one of the following:

- The backdrop.
- The poem written on the backdrop.
- The mechanical action of the backdrop.

Again, we are looking at whether to choose a narrow or broad definition of the team choice element. If the appraiser looks at the whole backdrop there is much to consider in giving the score. Even if the team chooses the entire backdrop, they could still describe the specific aspects of the backdrop that they would like to have scored.

### **How to decide on team choice elements and specialties**

Discuss team choice element elements early and often when writing the scripts and making the props, backdrops and costumes. Often the team naturally comes up with team choice element ideas as the script and props develop. team choice elements are appraised based on both creativity and workmanship. It is important to ask the team to decide what is creative when they are deciding on the team choice elements.

## **Deciding On Team Choice Elements**

Team Choice Elements are free-choice scoring opportunities provided as embellishments to the main Challenge. They allow a team to have two whatever-they-want opportunities to showcase something they've done and have it evaluated. The Team Choice Elements are scored on

To see what is desired, one must look at the scoring, for that is where the rubber meets the road in understanding what a Challenge seeks.

Theoretically, a team will pick two items which are team strengths and exhibit them. Like with all aspects, definitely help younger kids have realistic expectations to avoid later problems.)

So, with the team...one approach is to look at the Inventory in the Guide and then discuss it with the team: what are your strengths? Where do you think you will shine? Then, with that in mind, they can attack the Challenge.

Another approach is to attack the Challenge and develop the outline of the solution. Then ask the team to see where they have already used their strengths, and where they could embellish and strengthen it.

## **Selecting Team Choice Elements**

I encourage TM's to look at the Team Choice Elements as "free choice" items the TEAM selects because they are particularly proud of what they've accomplished in that element. Naturally, the team must be careful in what they select because there are restrictions against there being "overlap" between the Team Choice Elements and other scored elements. Equally important, the team should carefully specify their Team Choice Element items in the paperwork they provide to the appraisers to FOCUS the appraiser's attention on the aspects of their solution that demonstrate creativity and workmanship (the two scoring dimensions the appraisers must use to evaluate the Team Choice Elements).

HOW does a team go about developing and/or selecting items for their Team Choice Elements?

There are two main ways to go about this:

1. You can highlight the talents of the team members and develop items that highlight these talents
2. Develop the script and story and see what elements "shine" during the process, they basically experiment in creativity.

Some time before the team presents their solution at the tournament, the team must pick which of these various "experiments in creativity" represent their "best two". They should then spend a bit of "focused energy" to refine these two items further (keeping in mind that appraisers who see them for the first time will be evaluating them). The team should also spend some time creating a nice, focused description of WHY these items uniquely demonstrate the creativity and workmanship of the team.

## **Sometimes, Team Choice Elements Just Happen**

In February, your team should look at what they are most excited about and proud of, and those become the team choice elements.

## **Tacking on a Team Choice Element**

Sometimes Team Choice Elements can add to that overwhelming feeling...isn't the Main Challenge enough?! The intention of Team Choice Elements is to allow each Team to be scored on some items that are of particular interest to their team or are things that show their particular strengths. A lot of the rules regarding Team Choice Elements have to do with making sure the team is not getting 2 scores for the same item...for example the costume that is already being scored as a required element cannot also be scored as a team choice element.

The thing to avoid is Team Choice Elements that are tacked on as a display and not integrated into the solution. Rather Team Choice Elements offer an opportunity for the Team to use their strengths or passions in Solving the Challenge. As they develop their Solution see where something might really fit and enhance their Solution.

### **Team Choice Elements Are Worth Almost As Much as Instant Challenge**

The Team Choice Elements are a very important scoring element so, don't ignore them! As you advance from Regional to State to Globals, team choice elements increase in overall importance as the level of competition increases.