

Note from Akron Regional 2014 Some event tests at North Eastern Ohio Invitational Tournaments (Mentor, Solon...) are "written tests" similar to college exams.

While hands-on activities / Station Tests are wonderful and often recommended, they're not necessary unless the rules clearly demand them.

"Written tests" do fit within our North-east Ohio culture.

## Tips for Event Supervisors

### • Tips for All Events

- Make them easy and fast to grade. If you are running an event the last part of the day, be aware that scoring needs to be especially quick since the Awards Ceremony should begin by 4:15 pm.
- Don't make the event too long... it's okay if the students finish before the time period ends. Make it shorter than you think you should. This is a common problem with first time event supervisors.
- Also, be sure to design your event so that it lends itself to being "placeable." By this we mean the event must have something that can be graded and will produce a score for each team. Have an assortment of "Easy" questions so everyone can get some answers, but also many intermediate and some very difficult questions. This allows the students who worked really hard to demonstrate their skills and stand out from the pack.
- Prepare answer sheets that can be scored quickly. Do not hesitate to use multiple choice type questions or questions with simple answers that are one word or a few words as well as short answer questions. Some events lend themselves to identifying unknowns, etc.
- Be sure to have some place on the answer sheet or event materials for the students to write their team/school name and their names.
- Be sure to read the rules for recommendations for breaking ties. **TIES MUST BE BROKEN AT THE RAW SCORE LEVEL.** The best way to break ties is to select parts of your event or certain questions to use. Score all parts of the event and then if ties exist, use the team's score on the part of the event you selected. It would be good to have more than one area selected in case a tie exists after the first tie breaker is used. **TIME IS NOT A TIE BREAKER in content based events.**
- It is essential to follow this year's rules exactly as written and ensure that the experience is the same for all competitors. The biggest complaint from coaches is when supervisors do not follow the rules as published or follow last year's rules. Trust that some students will know ALL the rules, and they will tell you about them.
- Refer to the national website [www.soinc.org](http://www.soinc.org) frequently for rule clarifications for events as well as helpful resources. Any clarifications you have regarding your event must be communicated to the regional tournament director.
- For events requiring impound, it is essential that the supervisor have a specified individual to whom the impounded device will be delivered. Students spend a lot of time making these devices, and security is essential.
- It is very important to stick to the schedule and finish the event on time. If a student arrives late, where possible, he/she should be allowed to compete using the time remaining for that session.

## Four Possible Event Formats:

- **Method One - Station/ Rotational Format**

- This method is fairly easy as the teams involved simply rotate through the event answering 1 to maybe 4 questions per station. This type of set-up works really well with an answer sheet per team being all that is required for grading.
- Care should be taken to try to design each station to require about the same amount of time. Usually 14 to 16 stations are sufficient which means about 2 to 3 minutes per station.
- If more teams are present than stations, simply have rest stations periodically in the room or have some teams wait to enter the rotation.
- Number your locations and arrange them so that the students can quickly and easily move from one location to the next one. Make sure that everyone has writing utensils, extra paper, and any other required materials before they enter the room.
- You should call your roll outside the room since it is already set up with questions on the tables or desks. An alternative method is to have all of the questions face- down until you are ready to begin. It is important that no one has seen the questions before you begin.
- Students must take their answer sheet and writing materials with them as they move. Remind them to look only at their own answer sheet and to keep any conversations at a whisper so they do not let others hear their answers.
- It is advisable to tape down the question sheets at each location.
- The event supervisor must choose the length of time between locations and make sure that it remains exactly the same throughout the entire contest. The number of teams present determines the length of time. The State tournament will have 40 teams per division. This could limit the time to 1.25 minutes per location which would allow barely enough time for check-in and instructions in a 50-minute block. Some events have allowed only one minute per location when only 50 minutes are available in the event period. Try to choose a time that will give students the maximum time without causing you problems.
- The event cannot run overtime. That would be a serious problem. Many students must get to their next event immediately.
- Tell the students that anyone tampering with the materials in an effort to confuse or delay other teams will be disqualified from the event. It is very important that each team find the questions and materials in the same order as all other teams.

- **Method Two - Stationary Format**

- A student or team of students will sit in one location for the duration of the contest. All of the questions and materials they will use are at that location. They may be provided with an answer sheet so that they do not mark on the questions or other materials.
- This method is very similar to the more typical test that students are accustomed to BUT should include applications and hands-on as much as possible. Science Olympiad discourages paper and

pencil testing that resembles tests given in a classroom setting.

- This type of event format should also include graphs, diagrams to interpret, observations to make about a set-up of some type, interpretation of information presented in a video, questions about a demonstration that might be performed for the entire group, etc. This requires more preparation as far as copies of the event, etc. CAUTION: This type of format usually takes longer to grade and should be considered when preparing the event.
- Each team must have all of the questions, pictures, specimens, etc. at their disposal. If the event period is 50 minutes, prepare questions that should take about 40 minutes to complete.
- The event supervisor should design enough questions for the event period, an answer sheet and key. Make sure that you have enough copies of the test in advance so that there will be enough copies and locations for the teams.
- The event supervisors usually make the copies they will need. Your tournament director has agreed to make copies for you, if you turn in all materials that are to be copied well in-advance of the tournament date. If so, your copies will be waiting for you at registration in Bierce Library.
- There is a tendency for some event supervisors to lean toward a written test with recall answers. Some events have one part that consists of test questions. Test should also include questions that emphasize critical thinking and reasoning. Questions that ask students to observe, describe, evaluate, analyze, apply, predict, interpret, classify, measure, infer, hypothesize, explain, and make judgments should be used.
- When your event is finished, use your assistants/volunteers to help you score the answer sheets as quickly as possible.

• **Method Three - Lab Practical Set-up Format**

- This method is something of a combination of the first two methods where the team has its own set of materials or equipment with which to perform an experiment or whatever is required. This format requires more set-up on the part of the event supervisor and should be a factor that is strongly considered in terms of the room in which the event is held, number of teams competing, etc. The event supervisor could have 3 sets of 6 or 8 identical stations, and the teams know they must complete one station in each set. If more than one lab station is to be completed by students during the event, it is important to have multiples of each station so that every team has the same amount of time at each station and no one has to wait on another team.
- Materials, tools, and supplies (such as water, pH paper, reagents, etc.) are placed at marked locations for their use during the labs.
- Safety is a critical issue, and students must wear the designated safety equipment at all times in the lab.
- It is important that the event supervisor has everything ready-to-go and is working with the current year's rules.
- After the initial instructions, the supervisor should circulate throughout the lab to observe students, answer questions, and provide for their safety.

- Be sure to warn students about safety and tell them that anyone tampering with the supplies to hinder the work of other teams will be disqualified immediately.
- Most lab events are usually scheduled earlier in the day to give you sufficient time to score the results, but it is still important to get the results to the scorers as soon as possible.

- **Method Four - Construction/Performance Format**

- Some events require students to construct a device prior to the tournament, and other others have students build a device during the competition.
- It is very important for the event supervisor to be very familiar with the specifications for the device. Think about exceptions and challenges to these rules and call us prior to the contest if you have questions. Make special note of the events that require impounding.
- Sometimes devices fall apart or get slightly damaged while traveling on activity buses. If a team shows up with a device that does not meet all specs, we generally let them make minor corrections on the spot (if this does not give them an unfair advantage). Usually this is as simple as something sticking out of the device that can be tucked in or removed. If we can allow students to make simple corrections (quickly), we would rather do this and let them compete than send them away in a "cold-hearted" fashion.
- If a device is unsafe but could be made safe by the removal of some part or object, we usually allow the student to do this and continue. This must be done prior to operation. If a device becomes unsafe during the event, the supervisor must stop it at that point. Safety cannot be compromised.
- If the team cannot get their device to meet all specifications, most events have a provision for them to continue to compete if the device will work. However, none of the devices that fail to meet specs are allowed to rank higher than any device that did meet the specs. Make sure that you are clear on this point for your event. If a device will not operate at all it is still important to record that the team did show up with a device and participated. Be sure to record any team that was absent from your event.
- If your event requires an item that must be built before the tournament (i.e.Scrambler, Towers/Bridges, Electric Vehicle, etc.) consider either some kind of permanent marking to keep the same item from showing up in next year's tournament and/or a rule that states you cannot use the same item again.
- Be sure you are familiar with the current rules for your event; most events change annually. Keep in mind the event may vary greatly between the B (middle school) and C (high school) divisions.