

# Verbal

## It is never too early to start practicing Spontaneous!

Whether you are coaching a brand new Div. I team, or seasoned Div. III competitors, I encourage you to start each year with basic problems to help everyone get back in the swing of things. We're going to start with a Verbal problem, so here are my

### Top 5 tips for Verbal problems:

1. If you want the extra points for a creative response you have to give the judges something extra. Strive for specific, detailed responses that go above and beyond the minimum requirements of the problem. I don't think I have ever heard a one-word response that was creative.
2. Be enthusiastic! Great delivery can elevate a pretty good response and make it creative. Conversely, poor delivery can kill an excellent idea. If the Judges can tell that the kid delivering a response doesn't think it's any good, why would the Judges like it?
3. Responses that focus on ideas and emotions are usually more thoughtful and nuanced than ones that deal solely with objects. They are more likely to be scored as creative.
4. Adding an unexpected twist or interesting detail such as a literary or historic reference can be key to taking a response over the top and getting those extra points.
5. Humor can also elevate a response, but is highly subjective. Team members should remember that the humor should be aimed toward the judges, not their team mates.

When you are reading the problem instructions to the team, don't read them the material in parenthesis or the Coaching/Judging notes. Those are for your reference only.

Have all team members sit or stand in a circle.

## Things That Fly

(Read the following rules to the team.)

1. **You will have 1 minute to think and 3 minutes to respond.**
2. **You are not allowed to talk to each other at any time.**
3. **Team members will respond in order starting with the person closest to the teacher's desk and going around the circle.** *(Tell the team who will start, who goes next, etc.)*
4. You are not allowed to pass or skip a turn.
5. You will receive 1 point for each common response and 5 points for each creative response.

**Your problem is to name things that fly.**

**For example, you might say "Butterflies," or "Pilots fly airplanes."**

*(After reading the entire problem aloud, repeat the items in boldface. Begin by saying, "I repeat..." After the second reading is complete say "Part 1 begins NOW" and start timing. When Part 1 is over say "Response time begins NOW" and start timing.)*

## Coaching / Judging Notes:

- If a kid gets stuck it is OK to remind them that they can use the example given in the problem. The example will always be scored as a common response, but will give them time to think of a better response for their next turn. This tool should only be used in an emergency – definitely not more than once per kid per problem, even this early in the season.
- Emphasize the importance of giving high quality responses. In competition it is highly likely that the number of responses will be very limited – usually no more than 30 per team, and often as few as 15 total per team. I have written this problem with unlimited responses not because I want the kids to view it as a race, but because I didn't want to intimidate or confuse very young kids and new teams by adding extra requirements and supplies to this first problem.

**Examples of common responses:** Animals living their lives or people doing their jobs in the usual way. Most birds fly. This doesn't mean that listing birds and flying insects is a terrible idea, but ideally this should be done in a pinch.

**Examples of creative responses:** "Emperor penguins fly through the Antarctic Sea." Why is this a creative response? 1- It takes the expected idea that birds fly and adds a twist by naming a bird we all know doesn't fly the way most birds do. 2 - It is very specific. We're not talking about just any penguin, these are Emperor penguins, and they live in Antarctica. You may be thinking that this is way over the heads of a Div. I team, but I'm sure there are plenty of second graders who know that Emperor penguins live in Antarctica & swim in the sea to catch fish. "My imagination took flight when I read Harry Potter!" Why is this a creative response? 1- It deals with a concept – imagination – rather than a physical thing. This doesn't make it guaranteed to be scored as creative, but it is a good place to start. 2 - It contains a specific literary reference that every kid and judge will recognize and appreciate. 3 – This response needs to be delivered with enthusiasm, like a true Gryffindor, to be assured of getting 5 points.

After the team has finished the problem, discuss which were the best responses. If the kids' opinions don't align with yours, explain why you judged them the way you did. Then choose a few of the common responses and have the team brainstorm ways to elevate those ideas and transform them into creative responses. If the kids can't think of ways to improve their responses, help them use the examples of creative responses given as a guide.