

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT INSTANT CHALLENGE! INSTANT CHALLENGE TIPS, IDEAS, AND PRACTICE

Instant Challenges are FUN!!

The Instant Challenge competition is a chance for your team to show off its creative problem solving skills as they demonstrate their teamwork and ability to "think on their feet."

Don't leave them to be done if there is time. Make time for them in your meeting schedule or have Instant Challenge Meetings. They can help warm up teams before working on their solutions for the main challenge, provide a way to break up a team meeting, or be a means to try out hypotheses teams have brainstormed as possible solutions to the main challenges. Instant Challenge Competition can often make or break a team at a tournament. It can separate a team that has learned to work well together from a team that never practiced team building skills.

BASIC TIPS

- Practice *Instant Challenge* at least once a week from the beginning.
- Do at least three (3) challenges each time.
- Spend 15-20 minutes to 1/2 hour
- Increase time as competition date nears
- Do as many types of each challenge as possible
- Teach the team how to generate a variety of creative responses.
- Use unusual materials
- HAVE FUN!

TYPES OF INSTANT CHALLENGES		
Performanced-Based	Task-Based	HYBRID
Without Props	To Communicate	Combines elements of Performance & Task Based Instant Challenges!
With Props	To Move	
Team Created Props	To Change	
Imaginary Props	To Protect	

Performance-Based Instant Challenges require teams to create a performance from real or imaginary props. The team must either create these props from given materials or use ones already provided. The type of presentation for these Instant Challenges will vary. They may include one or more of the following: *singing, miming, rhyming, dancing, etc.* Team members may enhance their characterizations through the use of *Improv, Mime, Body Language, Stage Presence, and/or Voice Alteration*. When brainstorming a solution to a performance-based instant challenge, teams should make sure they consider areas of Story Line Development such as: Situation, Conflict, Resolution, and Beginning-Middle-End. They may also want to think about using other theatrical elements including: Staging, Music, and Special Effects.

To see a **template for writing a Instant Challenges** see the end of this document.

Using the templates at the end of this document along with some imagination, ideas from improv books, and other instant challenges you will be able to create a wide variety of instant challenges for your team.

Task-Based Instant Challenges are more hands-on type challenges. Team members must work together to communicate, move, change or protect something with the materials they are given by the Appraisers. Sometimes they will be given items which they must manipulate and then give related verbal responses about what they have done with them for score.

In a Task-Based Instant Challenge the team will be given a variety of materials to use to solve the challenge. These materials will fall into three main categories: *Extenders/Structural Items; Connectors/Adhesives; and Controllers/ HOLDERS/Transporters*. When beginning task-based Instant Challenges it is recommended that you first discuss the three basic types of materials with your team. Then gather a wide variety of items from the lists below and have your team determine what the function(s) of each item might be. Remember keep asking the team in what ways could they use each item. Have them make a chart of the functions of the various items. For a list of different materials which fall into each category use the "Properties of Materials" template at the end of this document.

How to Train a Team for Performance-Based Instant Challenges

Performance-Based Instant Challenges usually have five(5) basic sub headings:

- **Challenge:** a brief summary of the Challenge
 - **Time:** A statement of how much time the team has for each part of the Challenge including brainstorming, preparation, and performance. Many times the brainstorming and preparation components are in one time block. Teams must learn to use their time wisely.
 - **The Scene:** This section sets up the rules of the team's performance.
 - **Items to Use in Your Presentation:** Items usually will be listed in two columns: those that can be altered (changed) and those that cannot be damaged (changed).
 - **Scoring:** This section gives the breakdown of how the team will be scored on their solution to the Challenge.
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- When practicing Performance-Based Instant Challenges stress to your team that they must Listen, Listen, Listen to the reading of the challenge!!!
 - Remind them that when an *Instant Challenge* says they must present their solution, skit, performance that they should consider the Appraisers their audience.
 - Work with them on using the brainstorming skills and techniques for planning a solution to Performance-Based Instant Challenges. These might include SCAMPER, ALoU, and Team Generated categories.

Successful Instant Challenges have more to do with teamwork than just thinking creatively. Emphasize that every *Instant Challenge* will have a teamwork scoring component. All teams need to **practice showing-off their team work skills**. This may include but is not limited to: having designated duties for different team members - timekeeper, summary person, questioner, reader, etc. With a young team, try to come up with different "roles" or jobs for each to have responsibility in the IC. It is best NOT to assign these roles, but to describe them and ask who in the group thinks he/she would be good at this role or like to try it? If more than one person, you can have TWO in a category - can't hurt. If nobody volunteers, have them draw "roles" from slips of paper for a few times and see if they fall into anything that is comfortable. Or if they've chosen roles and it doesn't seem to mesh; that's the time to insist everyone try a new role. Examples of roles might be:

1. **The Rule Person** This person reads the IC (if on paper) and throughout the solving is the person who refers back to the written challenge to be sure they are solving as directed and following rules. Many an IC has run aground when a team has an amusing presentation, but talks in a nonverbal, or touches the tape that

can't be touched, or changes the item that "can't be changed." The rule person keeps the focus on what is allowed.

2. **The Points Person** This person makes sure the team is getting the most points possible. [for example, if the challenge said 10 points for a skit and 50 points for each creative costume, the rule person would remind the team that costumes were important, point-wise, esp. if they got stuck writing a skit and forgot to dress up.] --Yes, rule person and points person might seem redundant, but you WANT two kids checking the rules and paper and points throughout, so there are two slightly different roles that overlap.
3. **The Timekeeper** This person must have a watch and must get used to checking it and telling the team when they are half-way through, or have a minute left, or whatever is appropriate. [sometimes, when the timekeeper isn't paying attention at IC practice, you may want to let the time run out and call TIME!... then allow another minute to finish and remind the timekeeper of the important duty. If you keep calling out the time, the timekeeper doesn't get in the habit of checking time.] You can always use TWO of these timekeepers.
4. **The Laughmeters** Often more than one person volunteers for this, but this is a job to be sure that the skit or whatever is funny (assuming it is supposed to be funny) and suggests quirky actions, character voices, funny lines and whatever else tickles their fancy.
5. **The Brainstorm Facilitator** This is the moderator of the group, who makes sure that everybody is participating and encourages the less-outgoing kids to speak up, and asks the babbling kids to "hold that thought" while another idea is heard. This person makes sure that there is some order to the teamwork and participation; if several people want to talk, this person identifies people in turn to speak, so that everyone gets a turn.
6. **The "What If?" Person** If you don't use up all your kids with jobs above doubling up, add a "what if?" person. This person listens to the first two ideas and then says "what if..." and adds on or changes one of the ideas. Even if they don't do this in a meet, this is great practice for thinking outside the box. There can be more than one "what if?" person. [example: someone says the skit can be animals in a zoo. The "what if?" person says, "or what if it can be animals on a farm?" and the 2nd "what if?" person says "what if it was an ANT farm?" and so on...]

Another factor to keep in mind is that in *Instant Challenge* the Appraisers must be able to hear a team's brainstorming in order to accurately score them on team work. Therefore, remind your team not to whisper when they are brainstorming. You or one of the team members might try sitting away from the team while they brainstorm in order to help them learn to speak loud enough to be heard by the Appraisers.

Have the team practice **brainstorming topic ideas** to fit a challenge scenario. They need to be able to get their ideas across to the other team members quickly and concisely to keep from wasting valuable time. They may want to practice doing this quick response type thinking in a limited amount of time. **RULE OF THREE.** If your team tends to keep going on suggesting new and better ideas long after they should have chosen something and started solving or writing the skit; give them a rule of three. That is, for the first decision, listen to 1,2,3 ideas and 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 time to chose one, add to it and move on.) It's fine to have all 7 kids make suggestions if they do quickly and make decisions they live with, but the Rule of Three helps with a team wherein each child loves only his/her own ideas and therefore keeps making suggestions.

In addition to practicing topic idea generation the team should also practice brainstorming **creative ways to use the given props before they alter them.** Remind them that once they tear or cut something that they may not be able to put it back to its original form.

One thing that can help teams work well under pressure is to have them practice, totally apart from any formal IC challenge, creating a beginning, a middle and an end of a story/skit. Have cards with odd phrases, character traits, items, a short scenario, etc.. on them. Break the kids up into two groups of three each, give each group a few cards with different elements on them and 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. These short skits

may 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.

It is also recommended to have the team do 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.

How to Train a Team for Task-Based Instant Challenges

Task-Based Instant Challenges usually have five(5) basic sub headings:

- **Challenge:** a brief summary of the Challenge
- **Time:** A statement of how much time the team has for each part of the Challenge including brainstorming, preparation, and performance. Many times the brainstorming and preparation components are in one time block. Teams must learn to use their time wisely.
- **The Set-up:** This section describes the overall set-up of the room. Team members will be told where they can be located during different parts of the Challenge.
- **Procedure:** this section includes the specific rules that the team is to follow. If it doesn't say it here, the team probably can do it.
- **Materials:** Items usually will be listed in two columns: those that can be altered (changed) and those that cannot be damaged (changed).
- **Scoring:** This section gives the breakdown of how the team will be scored on their solution to the Challenge.

When practicing Task-Based Instant Challenges stress to your team that they must Listen, Listen, Listen to the reading of the challenge!!!

LISTENING TIPS

- **Never assume anything.**
- **Don't jump to conclusions.**
- **Listen and understand all the information before deciding your approach.**
- **Concentrate on the challenge.**
- **If you have a mental block listen to your teammates.**

Remind your team that every item given to them in an instant Challenge may have many uses. They should always be looking for "alternative uses" for common items.

The team must remember that there are points for teamwork in every Instant Challenge. Some Task-Based Instant Challenges will demonstrate better teamwork skills if they break into sub-groups in order to solve the challenge efficiently in the time allowed. Teams may need to practice breaking up into sub-groups after initial brainstorming.

BASIC TIPS FOR TASK BASED INSTANT CHALLENGES

- Have the team redefine or reword the challenge in order to determine if they have any questions.
- The team should understand the goal of the challenge before forming a strategy or manipulating their materials.
- Have team designate and match tasks to individual specialties
- Have team members choose roles:
 - Time Keeper - Should help team stay on task in terms of time limits
 - Assemblers - Responsible for physical construction of solution

- Parts and Materials Persons - Responsible for any cutting, stapling, gluing and handling needed by the assemblers
- Idea Summary Person - listens to suggested solutions and helps team decide on one idea as the solution and a backup one.

Teams need to HAVE A PLAN before they solve the challenge

- Prioritize the information as they listen
- Agree on the goal
- Agree on the best strategy for the time allotted.
- Recognize a good solution when they think of or hear one.

Since task-based challenges need many consumable supplies you may want to try one of the following ways to have the parents help you with this task:

- Send a list home of what you need (cotton balls, toothpicks, paperclips, rubberbands, etc.) and ask each parent to send you 100 of them.
 - Send the list of supplies for two instant challenges with large resealable bags home with a team member and have the parent send them back for the next meeting. (hint: plan these instant challenge for two meetings away incase the team member forgets them)
 - Ask parents for \$5/team member and go out an purchase your own supply kit.
- ☆ Repeat instant challenges until the team agrees on the best solution.
 - ☆ Do the same instant challenge on different days but change one or two components. (materials, time, task to be accomplished)
 - ☆ Practice just by reading a challenge and then asking them questions about it. this will help improbe their listening skills. Questions might include: What is the goal?, How do you begin?, How do you end?, What rules must you absolutely remember?, Where were the points?, Etc. Video tape the teams solutions for them to review.
 - ☆ Train them to have a second solution ready.

How to use Thinking Time Effectively

- Look for the key words - Move, transport, change, etc.
- Break down the solution into components
- Examine materials available without altering them
- ASK:
 - What do we have to do?
 - What do we have to work with?
 - Is it better to do this first?
 - Does dividing the tasks seem more productive?
 - Should we have a team captain to manage the solution?
 - What are the limitations: lines you must or must not cross, materials that cannot be part of solution, items each team member must use, what can you touch or not touch?
 - Is there more than one part of the solution (phases) build then ____
- Consider the scoring: what parts of the solution receive the most points?
- Develop a team strategy before beginning work.
- Keep an eye on the clock: budget the time, allow time to think of alternatives.
- If you don't understand the rules ask the Appraisers questions.
- Designate one team member to concentrate on challenge details.
- Do this challenge ONLY don't think it is one you have done before.
- Stay cool!!!

Creating Your Own Performance-Based *Instant Challenges*

Action to be Taken By the Team	Item/Event Used/Created	Examples of Props Team Can Alter	Examples of Props Team Cannot Alter
To demonstrate new uses for	Peanut butter Swiss Cheese A fork A spoon A cell phone Paper Etc.	White plastic bags Large Sheets of Paper Aluminum foil Cardboard Tubes Labels Paper Clips Toothpicks	Scissors Balls Bicycle Tire Pan Lid Pans Glove Remote Control
To create & present	Songs Mini-Trial A new game Imaginary instruments Opposites Story w/o words A silent movie Ways to celebrate a birthday A new machine New Animals Novel vacations A different time period A new product Etc.	Paper Bags Roll of toilet paper Sheets of Paper Rubber Bands Coat Hanger Egg Carton Straws Envelope Clay Paper plate Cotton Balls Pasta Pipe Cleaners Tissues Plastic tableware	Waste Basket Colored Markers Ruler Pencils Bucket Metal Spoon Cans of Soda Rope Flashlight Shoe Yard Stick Dowel Towel Blanket Mirror
Design costumes for	Dog's birthday party A fashion show Etc.	Pastic cup Feather(s) Ribbon	Boxes Plastic shovel Etc.
Rescue your team from	Sinking Ship Wild Animals Snow Storm Etc.	Marshmallows Newspaper Piece(s) of String or Yarn Shoe boxes Masking Tape Mailing Labels Etc.	
Scoring may include:	Creativity of presentation (presentation skills) Creativity of product/story/event Creative use of props Humor How well team worked together		

Creating Your Own Task-Based *Instant Challenges*

Action to be Taken By the Team	Item to be Created	Examples of Props Team Can Alter	Examples of Props Team Cannot Alter
To build	Bridge to hold weight Tower to hold weight Tower to stand after being moved Any other type of structure for height, weight, length, thickness Any combination e.g.length & weight Container to hold items Etc.	Index Cards Paper Aluminum foil Cardboard Tubes Balloons Paper Clips Toothpicks Paper Bags Paper cups Paper Bowls Rubber Bands Coat Hanger Egg Carton Straws Envelope Clay Paper plate Cotton Balls Pasta Pipe Cleaners Styrofoam Cups Plastic tableware Spaghetti Clay Gum Drops Marshmallows Newspaper String Yarn Shoe boxes Tape Mailing Labels Etc.	Scissors Coat Hangers Balls Boxes Bowl Dowel Yard stick Ruler Pencils Spoons Yardstick Boxes Etc.
To move something	Around Obstacles Over Obstacles Across space Across distances Remove items across distances Remove obstacles w/o moving other items Build a vehicle Transport something Etc.	From moving From falling From changing From breaking Etc.	
To protect something	From original design To add to original To something new Etc.		
To change something			
Scoring may include:	How high or how long How much weight is held How many inches/feet were crossed Creativity of item(s) built Creative use of materials How many items are contained/reached goal How well team worked together Etc.		

Properties of Materials

Extenders Structural Infra-Structure	Connectors Adhesives	Controllers HOLDERS Transporters
Yardsticks Paper Index Cards Newspaper Page Pipe Cleaners Envelopes Rulers Paper Clips Straws Styrofoam Cups Paper Tubes Dowels Paper Plates Spaghetti Pencils Wire Coat Hanger Etc.	Mailing Labels Paper Clips Envelope Glue Toothpicks paper Tubes Clay Gum Drops Tape String Yarn Rubberbands Pipe Cleaners Marshmallows Pasta Etc.	Envelopes Lunch Bags Paper Paper Plates Clay Cups Tubes Trash Bags Newspaper Page Aluminum Foil Spoons Spoons Toothpicks Balloons Straws Cotton Balls Etc.