

Science Olympiad: Starting a Team

Important Websites

[State Website](#)

The state website is where you will register your team, get information about the state tournament (if/when you get there) and other useful information.

[Science Olympiad Website](#)

Official SciOly website. Has information for each of the events, materials you can purchase from the store (we have found the test resources most helpful) and get information on how to start a team.

[Student Wiki](#)

From the student wiki we got a lot of information about tests, events, help for the build events and all of the other information from a student perspective. It's where I sent students when I didn't know the answer to something

[Quizlet](#)

There are lots of public Science Olympiad quizlets out there that students can use.

Selecting your Team

Tryouts:

If you feel the need to hold tryouts, the following format has helped greatly:

Assign a number to each kid (for announcing purposes)

Day 1: Written exam. This will cover material from 7th-10th grade science. We pulled ours from things we found online (Virginia test prep, NY regents exams, etc).

Day 2: Build event-group the kids into teams of 3 or 4 and have them build something for you. This was a way for me to see creativity, make notes of leadership skills as well as assess their engineering mindset. Last year we did bridges made out of spaghetti and marshmallow (used to do straws, but that plastic waste bothered me..)

If you don't feel like you need to hold tryouts-just select 15 students that you feel will best be able to work on the team.

<p style="text-align: center;">The Team</p>	<p>You can only have 15 students on your competitive team. You are allowed to have more, but to avoid drama, we have stuck to 15 the past few years.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Application</p>	<p>Have students fill out an application and get teacher recommendations. We went with the current science teacher-as our 6th graders wouldn't be able to get that recommendation easily. This is also a contract of intent-by signing it I will be holding students and parents accountable for competition dates and such should their student be selected for the team.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Selecting the Team</p>	<p>We usually base our decisions mostly on the written exam. Our cutoff at BMS has usually been a 90% on the exam. From that we selected the top 15. We then took the build day information and started thinking about leadership, who needed to do engineering events and things of that nature.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Team is selected...now what?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Practice</p>	<p>Practice days in the beginning (prior to selecting events) are dedicated to students researching each event and selecting the few that they think they would most like to do. I am including a document in this file that I think will help with that.</p> <p>Basically, I created a google doc for each event, hyperlinked that doc to a spreadsheet and set up a rotation for 3 or 4 weeks where kids could select their top 3 events.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Scheduling Events</p>	<p>Each year the National Board sets up "blocks" of events that will compete together. Regionals are encouraged to follow this same format-and generally do.</p> <p>From this I set up a google form that students will select their top three in each block. Then I will sit down and try to pair up kids best I can in events that they were highly interested in.</p> <p>Build events are always trickier because they don't have a set time for competing and competitions choose when these will be held. I've had very few scheduling conflicts however in the past.</p> <p>Once they are scheduled, students start preparing. I have them create any sheets, documents or study materials in google docs-so they are easily shared</p>

with me. I like keeping copies of things just in case.

Materials

Building events will require the purchase of materials. Each event is different and require different things. I use the team money to purchase most of the stuff we need, or I see if family/friends will donate some supplies. I do try not to expect my parents to purchase the items needed.

Two of the events will require specific equipment (Crime Busters and Potions and Poisons). You will need things like beakers, graduated cylinders, test tubes, etc). There is a list that will be published on the National website.

Other events will require smaller things like stopwatch, scissors, magnifying glass, etc. All of this would be spelled out in the rules. If it doesn't explicitly say not to bring something, generally it is allowed. (like a highlighter for example).

I make a checklist each year from the rules and use that on the day before competition to make sure everything is packed in my car ready to go.

Binders will also be something you will need. Many of the events require them. Pay attention to the size of binder however! Some are very specific on size.

Goggles will be a must and Lab Aprons, or Lab Coats are necessary for several events. We also put together a team shirt ever year for kids to wear.

Advice

Label EVERYTHING with your team name. I made up covers and spines for the binders and labels for the boxes so if a kid left them somewhere they would come back to me. It also had our school name and logo on the label as well for easy identification if it needed to be returned to me.

Please know that I don't have all of the answers. I've learned a lot in the past 4 years of how to run a team and a lot has been trial and error.

I do put a lot of the responsibility on the students. I don't do the work for them and their success is dependent on their effort. I do check in with every team every week and for build events I give them strict guidelines for when things need to be accomplished.

Set up a calendar for yourself and the students. Place dates on the calendar for when they will take practice tests, have builds ready, etc. You need to build the team for how you feel will best benefit you and your team. It is truly what you make it.

Tentative Timeline

August: Begin Planning! Rules are not available yet, but you can start setting up your team.

- Register the team on the state website.
- Promote the team in the school building! Hang posters, signs, banners, advertise in school newsletter.
- Play your year. Set a date for an organizational, informational gathering with students and select a date for a parent meeting later in the fall.

September: Event rules are usually available on the SciOly website the first weekend in September. Read the rules carefully. You will be assigned to a regional competition, however, you can attend as many invitationals as you like-in TN or surrounding states.

- Hold interest meeting. Showcase what Science Olympiad is, have students fill out interest forms for things that they are interested in.
- Select your team. Either by tryouts or selection. Select student events (giving students choice-helps with buy in)
- Provide copies of event rules to students if you have not done so.
- Gather resources, study materials, supplies, and mentors. Build a library of information for each event.
- Recruit people who can help you with events, other teachers, industry experts, college professors
- Develop a practice schedule.

September through November: Organize your students and get them prepared for their events. Don't worry if you are still putting your team together-that's ok too.

- Make sure the team is registered at your regional. Contact your regional director if you have any questions. The schedule for your regional should be published at some point in this time.
- Register for invitationals if you so wish. These come with an entry fee, but are great ways to practice and dip your toes in the

water of competing. See state website for listing of these events.

- Order and design shirts for your team
- Organize a team photo with your yearbook sponsors.
- Plan a parent meeting to go over needs for upcoming competitions
- Fundraise or seek sponsors to cover various expenses-or ask for student fees
- Attend a coaches clinic. These are invaluable for coaches to look over new events and for networking with other coaches.

December through January: Most invitationals occur in this time frame.

- Build events should have their first iterations well under way and mostly built in this time.
- Testing of build events should occur and any adjustments should be made.
- Obtain permission forms, medical releases, and any other waivers, field trip needs for your school and county
- Organize transportation to the regional tournament
- Plan for the day of and put together your schedule for the day. Communicate this with students so they are aware of what they are doing.

February through April: Regional events happen in this time frame.

- Make sure shirts are ordered if not already done so
- Finalize travel to regionals
- Collect permission slips
- Communicate to faculty
- Practice, practice, practice!
- Organize parent volunteers for the day of competition
- Confirm schedules for regional event and get materials labeled with school name and information for competition.
- If you win and advance to the state tournament-Yay!!!! Now you need to prepare for state. Register your team with the state after you win (State website). Look for the emails from the state coordinators for information on build events (you have to schedule the time slots for these).
- Reach out to other experienced coaches for advice as you advance to the state tournament.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Practice, Practice, Practice! <p>May: Any teams competing at nationals have more work to do, otherwise, it is time to wrap up your year and celebrate!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Plan a team party to celebrate the team's great work this year● Optional: Hand out awards to the students (regionals and invitationals typically have certificates you can give)● Write thank you notes to anyone who helped throughout the year. (parents, industry experts, sponsors, or any other volunteers.) <p>June through July: You survived the year!! Yay! Now is the time to rest, relax and plan for next year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Are there any changes you want to make to your team?● If you can go to the Summer Institute for SciOly-go!● Organize your reference materials in some way, events will change from year to year.
<h2>Have Questions?</h2>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Reach out to schools in your area and their coaches.2. Email me! I'm willing to answer questions. Just know I am a full time teacher and it may be a day or so before I respond. (caitlin.meador@wcs.edu)3. Check out the websites above. The Student wiki is AMAZING!!! It is a wealth of information.