

## Props

Everyone's lives are getting more and more hectic. Students participate in multiple activities and the demands at school (MCAS) can sometimes be overwhelming for individuals. There has been a noticeable drop in the solution creativity in recent years. Those of us that have been around a long time would like the teams to get as much out of DI as they can. They will develop lifelong skills through DI that will serve them well in all facets of their life if they "invest" in DI each season.

Suggestions to expand creativity and stretch the imagination:

- a. Spend time at every meeting manipulating material. Paper clips, folding paper, bending straws, separating string into fine threads (Global IC example) etc.  
Create an "inspiration box" that the team manager and teammates can contribute to and use this for Instant Challenges and material manipulation. Spend time looking at books and researching on the internet.
- b. Need an item...a recyclable material may be able to be substituted.  
Example: Large metal washers are expensive. A team needed hundreds of them for their solution and this would put them over the budget. Therefore, they substituted washers made from a milk jug cut into 2" circles

and hole punched in the center. The appraisers were impressed with their problem solving skills, as well as their creativity.

- c. Good enough should almost never be good enough. The intent is not to solve the challenge's required elements or create props with as little thought as possible. The final result should have stretched the team's capabilities and imaginations.
- d. Take the team on field trips. The ICA (Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA) often has excellent exhibits from artists that use recyclables (Tara Donovan). If you can't get to the ICA then research the exhibit online. Many towns and museums (Boston Children's Museum) have recyclable centers.
- e. Consult Rules of the Road for list of acceptable recyclables/trash
- f. Be sure to put a *fair* garage sale price. You cannot buy a new drill to use as a power source and say it was a garage sale item. Teach your team to be honest and forthright. The rule is "can another team duplicate your challenge for the same cost". Level playing field for all teams.

## Trash/Recyclables

1. Every Central Challenge has a budget. The best way to stretch your budget is to use "trash" or recyclables to embellish/make costumes, props, scenery, and required elements. When using recyclables you can put \$0 on the expense tournament page for those items. Trash items on the other hand can also stretch the budget, but a "garage sale cost" must be assigned.
  - Budget stretching ideas for costumes – use Salvations Army garments as the base structure of the costume. The Salvation Army had discount days where all items with a certain tag color are a dollar or two. Using clothing for the base can especially help younger teams who haven't learned clothing construction skills or have limited fine motor skills. The recyclable materials can then be adhered to the clothing base.

- Using recyclables can often stretch the team's imagination to take their "props" beyond the expected. Helps the students look at objects from a different perspective.
- Recyclables are often plentiful and can be collected weekly from home or school.
- The teams can have fun collecting recyclables.
  - a. School drive for soda cans and empty chip bags.
  - b. Calling companies for donations – Hood for new milk gallon containers. This helps the teams work on their negotiating, presentation and budgeting skills.
- Once a team starts to use recyclables they start to look at things differently and this elevates the creativity of their solutions.
- Examples:
  - a. Cardboard – can be cut and painted in a variety of ways. (Sea horses, dragon in wall, foundation for backdrop (Hollywood), scales of dragon, frame with icing detail (highlight a skill – piping on picture frame done with icing from a student studying to be a pastry chef), stalagmites, instruments (guitar and Beatles' drums), mask, layered to make a simple machine.
  - b. There are different kinds of cardboard – from very thin to very thick
  - c. Soda cans – can be shaped/manipulated and colored (Sharpie) (Moonshine backdrop, dragon year costumes, embossed (black and silver door in flapper skit)
  - d. Laminating sheets from school – colored with sharpie to make stain glass
  - e. Carpet tubes – structures that are very stable, furniture (chairs)
  - f. Water bottles – cut into circles to make a chandelier, vehicle (lightweight)
  - g. Paper bags – walls of dragon cave, twisted for spider hair, shaped into hats (using coat hangers to mold shape), modeled to look like leather (book of spells)
  - h. Garbage bags – road, chimney sweep broom, stripes on dress, blue skirt, bushes

- i. Store plastic bags – cut in strips for a boa, braided
- j. Magazines – flowers on car, clock
- k. Boxes and food bags - girl scout cookies boxes cut into squares and fringed to make material for a dress, chip bags – Beatles' coats, shoes
- l. Paper – rolls for beetles frames, containers
- m. Milk jugs- igloo,
- n. Paper towel/toilet paper rolls – tubes to transports items (ramp)
- o. Paint chips – costumes and scenery

#### Trash

- a. Filings from break jobs at car garages (magnetic)
- b. CDs – cape, wheels
- c. Plastic silverware – lamp shade, dress
- d. Acorns – design on blue costumes
- e. Chip bags – costumes
- f. Candy wrappers – jewelry
- g. Pop tops – Purse, necklace
- h. Sticks – chair, decoration
- i. Egg shells – mosaic set piece

#### Garage sale items

- a. Old records – melt into corset or stacked to make a stool.
- b. Clothes
- c. Old bike – parts
- d. Leaf blowers or anything with a motor
- e. Gears
- f. Cassette tapes – crochet tape into a material
- g. Hula hoops