

Welcome to Instant Challenge

Your quick-start guide to one of the most exciting parts of Destination Imagination!

What *Is* Instant Challenge?

At your tournament, your team will be scheduled to do an Instant Challenge (IC) in addition to your Team Challenge. Instant Challenges are kept **confidential** until the day of the tournament, so your team will not know anything about the specific Instant Challenge you will be asked to solve until you are escorted into your IC room. All teams in your main challenge, at your competition level, will be presented the same challenge.

The Instant Challenge portion usually lasts between **5 and 10 minutes** and is worth up to **100 points**. Although each challenge is different, all of them reward **teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving under pressure**. The instant challenge can be a make or break moment for first and second place!

IC Challenge Types

Your IC will fall into one of these main types:

- **Task-Based:** Build something or complete an objective using specific materials.
 - Build a very tall tower
 - Build a bridge across a gap to hold weights
 - Retrieve objects from behind a boundary

- **Performance-Based:** Create and act out a story, skit, or scene.
 - What if animals could talk?
 - Your team is transported back in time!
 - Solve a mystery!

- **Combination:** Do both! Build and then perform using your creation.
 - Create a translator to communicate with aliens!
 - Build a trophy or award for a deserving hero!

Special note: At affiliate tournaments, and more commonly Global Finals, there might be unique challenge types like:

- Non-verbal (No spoken word)
 - Use sounds or motions to send instructions to your teammates
- Advanced Task-based Challenges involving:
- light/ shadows
 - Build something to block light
 - Build something to reflect light
 - Build something to cast shadows, to cover items for score.
- Wind:
 - Build a device that can be blown around
 - Build a device to blow over weights
 - Build a device to guard something from a fan
- Water:
 - Build something that can potentially float with weights or sink
 - Build a tower on a floating platform
- Challenges where the team may be split in half and blocked from seeing the other members, by a curtain or divider.

Common Materials and Their Roles

Material	Common Use
Paperclips, rubber bands, tape	Connectors – to fasten things together
Straws, pencils, craft sticks	Extenders – to build outward or upward
Tape, string, rubber bands	Controllers - Keep objects connected or in one spot

Think outside the box! A rubber band could be snapped to then tie things together. Newspapers can always be rolled to make a supportive tube! It's never a bad idea to just gather general supplies that could be used in IC's to experiment with their properties.

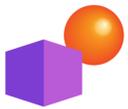
You won't know exactly what materials you'll get—but learning how to work with everyday items is part of the fun!



Flow of IC on Tournament Day

Here's what you can expect during your Instant Challenge experience:

- 1. Team Check-In**
Arrive at the designated check-in station. Your team is marked as "here" in the scoring program.
- 2. The IC Promise**
Say the Instant Challenge Promise together as a team. (Explained later on!)
- 3. Inside Holding**
You'll wait with other teams until your group is called. Try to focus and relax!
- 4. Being Escorted In**
An IC appraiser will confirm your team name and number, and ensure prohibited items are not brought in.
- 5. Team Manager Decision**
If a Team Manager joins, they'll follow the team into the IC challenge room and take the observer seat—or wait at the exit / chill-out area.
- 6. Entering the Room**
The team will normally gather around a table in the center of the room. They may look, but should not touch any materials or parts of the instant challenge setup. It is okay to get excited, but please do not whisper thoughts or ideas to team mates until the time begins.
- 7. Welcome & Rules**
An appraiser reads a welcome statement, and there may be short introductions! Your team will then be presented with paper copies of the challenge to read along with, as an appraiser reads the challenge aloud.
- 8. Start Time!**
At the end of the reading, the appraiser says: "**Your time starts now!**" and the team begins solving!



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9. **End & Exit**

Once time ends, the team should set down their materials and or devices, or stop their performance, even if they are in the middle of an action or event. For task-based challenges, you may see an appraiser measuring or counting, but they will not share the result live.

10. **Chill-out**

An appraiser will take the team towards the exit. At some tournaments, there is an optional chillout room where teams may quietly discuss what had gone both right and or wrong with theory team manager, before entering the main challenge site again.

Please remember the IC promise and do NOT discuss the IC anywhere else in the tournament site!

The IC Promise

Before your challenge begins, you and your team will be asked to say the **Instant Challenge Promise** together at the check-in table.

Promise: “We promise not to talk about the Instant Challenge or what we did in our solution UNTIL THE END OF MAY. If we are heard or are found to have shared this Challenge with anyone, we will be disqualified from the tournament. However, we can talk about it privately among our team and Team Manager(s)!”

This tradition helps keep IC **fair and fun for everyone**, especially since the same challenges may be reused at tournaments across other states and even countries. Teams are expected to honor this promise and keep the challenge confidential—even after their tournament ends. Teams may discuss and share after the end of May, though!

Reminder: The **Declaration of Independence** form, completed before the tournament, helps clarify who is on the team and participating in the IC, and ensures everyone understands and agrees not to share any challenge information in advance.



What NOT to Bring Into IC

To protect the integrity and fairness of the challenge, **no personal items** are allowed into the Instant Challenge room unless previously cleared with the tournament director. This includes:

- **Cell phones**
- **Recording devices**
- **Smartwatches or analog watches**
- **Other electronics of any kind**

This rule helps ensure that all teams rely on the **timekeeper official** for time updates, not personal devices.

Exception for Medical Devices: If a team member requires a phone or other device for medical needs (e.g., insulin pumps, seizure monitoring), this is allowed. Teams are asked to complete the [Tournament Accommodation Request Form](#) as early as possible to ensure that tournament officials are prepared to make this type of exception.

Coats and bags should remain outside the room, or may be **kept with the Team Manager (TM)** if absolutely necessary. As a best practice, leave bulky items with parent/guardians or backup TM's before arriving at check-in.

Can the Team Manager Go In?

Yes! Only one TM may come in. The team may decide to enter IC without a team manager, or the team manager may stay behind to wait in the chillout room if they prefer.

- Teams may choose to **enter the room without their Team Manager.**
- If present, the Team Manager should sit in the designated **observer chair** and **must not interfere** with the challenge in any way.
No whispering, gesturing, or assisting is permitted.
- *One-Time Entry Rule:*
If a Team Manager supports **multiple teams**, they may only observe IC with their **last team of the day**. This avoids any chance of accidentally seeing a challenge more than once. While it is rare, different challenges could have overlap with the

same, or even a similarly themed IC. This is also done to safeguard the team manager from the perception of cheating.

Before You Enter: Calming and Prepping

IC can be stressful—but it’s also fun! Here are a few tips to help the team get into the zone:

- **Breathe deep** – nerves are normal.
 - **Smile and stay positive** – your attitude helps the whole team.
 - **Use the inside holding room** to get focused. Some teams may play word games or small mental exercises to get “in the zone”.
 - **Remind each other:** you’re in this together, and you’re ready! While IC is an important scoring part of the overall experience, it is not the end-all be-all.
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Helpful Hints for Each Challenge Type

There is no Interference during Instant Challenge- share these tips with your team when they practice Instant Challenge!

- **Performance Tips:**
 - Use **paper and pencil** (if provided) to sketch a quick Beginning, Goal, and Ending (BGE) before the performance! Teams are generally allowed to keep the paper with them as well to reference during their performance.
 - Speak clearly and loudly, whispering makes it harder to appraise.
 - The team should not be afraid to assign roles quickly and then go! If they spend too long thinking of small details like character names, they may miss out on planning the overall performance.

- Not everyone needs a “Star” part. Someone could be a narrator, someone could be an interactive scenery object.
 - **Task Tips:**
 - Be sure to always review all of the materials. It can be wise to move materials to the floor, or closer to any setup the team may need to interact with.
 - Assign roles: builders, testers, idea people, time checker!
 - Some challenges have one part to design and test, and one part to meet an objective for score. Other challenges are just a single block of time to design, build, and gain points. **Make sure your team is actively working to secure points if the challenge is just one part!**
 - **Combo Tips:**
 - Divide and conquer. Sometimes it is best for one part of the team to build, while the other plans a short performance.
 - The team should think ahead about how they’ll incorporate a device / creation into their performance!
 - Combination challenges are almost always two parts. Make sure to use time in part one wisely, to be prepared for part two.
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How Scoring Works (Without Giving Too Much Away)

Objective Scoring – Points given based on a clearly measurable objective. Weights held, total height, number of objects retrieved.

Subjective Scoring – Points given based on appraisers’ opinions of how well or creatively you met a requirement. Each appraiser scores individually, then the scores are averaged. This can involve creativity, teamwork, and risk taking.

Zero Scoring – All-or-nothing points given for meeting a clear requirement. If it happens, you get full points; if it doesn’t, you get zero. This may be like having a bridge spanning a gap by the



end of the first part of the challenge. Another example could be building a device that could support 3 different types of weights at once for bonus score!

Appraisers look at:

- Teamwork: Cooperation, Communication, Focus, Respect
- Creativity: intentionally moving beyond a known solution and incorporating a team's strengths, talents, and interests, while also combining components of prior learning, experiences, and research into the solution.
- Use of materials/Risk: A mix of wow factor and ingenuity.
- How well the team met the challenge's measured goals

Common Misconceptions:

- Talking loudly is *not* bad teamwork. We understand the team may just be excited, and under pressure!
 - Whispering isn't better—it's harder to appraise.
 - The team is not judged on perfection—they are judged on collaboration and effort.
 - Appraisers are always looking to award as many points as possible, not take them away!
 - Do not let a potential "bad" IC performance ruin your main challenge! Sometimes an instant challenge can be really tough. If it is tough for your team, it may also be a challenge for others. If you ever feel disappointed or upset, please do not let that experience bring down the creativity or enthusiasm of your main challenge presentation, if you have yet to perform that later!
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Additional Tips, and Practice

Team Roles: While not required, teams where each member has one, or multiple “defined” roles normally leads to a much more cohesive, and successful experience!

- **The Timekeeper:** Keeps track of the time- it goes so much faster than you expect. It is always good to warn team-mates when there is 30 seconds remaining, such as if they must place an item in an area to be scored before time is up. This person would need to ask the appraiser team for time updates consistently, as timekeeping devices may not be brought into the IC room.
- **The Details & Rules person:** Responsible for listening for the details of the challenge and making sure the team knows what they should and should not do. Challenges will clearly lay out any boundaries or specific rules that must be followed, generally anything not mentioned is fair game. A written copy of the challenge will be provided to the team.
- **The point person:** Helps analyze the points. Getting the most points is generally the objective, but there can be multiple ways to get there. Sometimes a challenge may have a high risk way to get a lot of points, or a lower risk way to build up more points if the action is repeated. It always pays to review if there are multiple solutions to still earn maximum points.
- **Teamwork facilitator:** Makes sure everyone’s ideas are heard and helps the team decide together before touching materials. This role encourages the team to pause, plan, and coordinate, so they don’t just rush in. Think of it as the “pause and think” guide for the group.

Keeping team members’ “competitive advantages” in mind: Everyone has their own skills and abilities; as you work as a team and discover where everyone shines, make sure to encourage those team members to contribute to their area of “expertise” more!

- **Builders:** Does anyone on the team have a natural talent for building or creating the solution? Others may not be the best at building, but they may be very steady, and good at balancing items such as weights on a bridge, or tower.
- **Performers:** Does anyone on the team have good public speaking, improv, or acting skills? Is anyone really funny, or good at miming?
- **Developers:** Someone who can think on their feet is always a good help! Even if you are not interested in building the solution, if you see something going wrong, or potentially

breaking / tipping over, can you think of anything the builders could try to fix, or repair the team created solution?

What to Consider When Reading ICs

Don't immediately dive in! Always take a brief moment to review ideas first!

Key Phrases

It is important to pay attention to key phrases as the appraiser reads the challenge such as:

- How many thing(s) you must build, move, create

- **What may you NOT do:**
 - Examples:
 - Talk
 - Cross a line or boundary
 - Change or Alter
 - Touch something
 - Attach to something
 - What may you not use in your solution/presentation?

- **When can you use the materials**
 - Right Away
 - After a certain time
 - Not after a certain time (Example: stop building after Part One)
 - May you keep building when Part 2 starts?

Next: Check the points

- Height reached
- Weight held
- Creative Use of Materials
- Risk taking in design
- How much Distance covered

When you look at the points it is important to determine if anything like height, weight, distance has a limit to how many points you can earn, so you know how much time to spend on that element.

- It may be fun to build the tallest tower possible, but if the maximum height is 25 inches, going higher for fun could risk it tipping over!

Finally: Check the time:

It is important to look at the time you have to build, move, or design to help you decide if you are going to sacrifice creativity points for more height, distance, number built, or weight held.



The team may need to divide and conquer to do different tasks.

Final Encouragement

IC is a **safe, supportive space** to try new things, be creative, and work as a team. It's okay to mess up. It's okay to laugh. The most important thing is that you do it together!

Best of luck to you this Destination Imagination Season! :)

Bonus Content: Practicing During the Tournament Season

While preparing for ICs is important before tournament day, the best results come from practicing them consistently throughout the season. One of the easiest habits to build is starting each team meeting with one or two ICs. This not only helps teams sharpen their skills over time, but also creates a natural rhythm where the team begins to expect it, and it gives them a chance to reset and focus after a busy school day.

If you're looking for ready-made practice material, don't forget about the DI Roadmap (pages 86–108), which includes many challenges from past tournaments, and the IC practice set in the [Destination Imagination Resource Area](#). These resources can save you time and ensure your team sees a variety of challenge types. **A great role for a volunteer parent/guardian can be to prep the needed materials ahead of time so you can focus on guiding the team.**

Practicing an IC all the way through (with full setups like taped squares, etc.) is ideal, but even simply reading through challenges can be valuable. For example, you might hand your team a printed IC and have them brainstorm strategies, even without the materials on hand. This is a quick and low-prep way to keep ideas flowing and help your team practice flexible thinking, even if you can't run a full build.

The key takeaway: consistency matters more than volume. Doing ICs regularly, even in small ways, builds team confidence, creativity, and collaboration, so when tournament day comes they're ready for anything.