

**NEW YORK STATE  
HIGH SCHOOL  
MOCK TRIAL  
TOURNAMENT  
RULES  
  
PART I**

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## MOCK TRIAL TOURNAMENT RULES

### 1. TEAM COMPOSITION

- a. The Mock Trial Tournament is open to all 9th–12th graders in public and nonpublic schools who are currently registered as students at that school.
- b. If a school chooses to limit student participation for any reason, this should be accomplished through an equitable “try-out” system, not through disallowing participation by one or more entire grade levels.
- c. Each school participating in the Mock Trial Tournament may enter only **ONE** team.
- d. Members of a school team entered in the Mock Trial Tournament—including teacher-coaches, back-up witnesses, attorneys, and others directly associated with the team’s preparation—are **NOT** permitted to attend the trial enactments of any possible future opponent in the contest. This rule should not be construed to preclude teams from engaging in practice matches, even if those teams may meet later during the competition.

**Violations of this rule can lead to being disqualified from the tournament.**

- e. Immediately prior to each trial enactment, the attorneys and witnesses for each team must be physically identified to the opposing team and the judge by stating their first and last names. Please do not state the name of your school in front of the judge since the judge will not otherwise be told the name of the schools participating in the enactment he or she is judging.

### 2. OBJECTIONS

- a. Attorneys should stand when making an objection, if they are physically able to do so.
- b. When making an objection, attorneys should say “objection” and then, very briefly, state the basis for the objection (for example, “leading question”). Do not explain the basis unless the judge asks for an explanation.
- c. Witnesses should stop talking immediately when an opposing party makes an objection. Please do not try to “talk over” the attorney making an objection.

### 3. DRESS

We emphasize to the judges that a student’s appearance is not a relevant factor in judging his or her performance. However, we strongly encourage students to dress neatly and appropriately. A “business suit” is not required.

### 4. ABOUT STIPULATIONS

Any stipulations are binding on all participants and the judge and may **NOT** be disputed at the trial.

### 5. OUTSIDE MATERIALS

Students may read other materials such as legislative histories, judicial opinions, textbooks, treatises, etc., in preparation for the Mock Trial Tournament. However, students may cite only the materials and cases provided in these Mock Trial Tournament materials.

### 6. EXHIBITS

Students may introduce into evidence or use only the exhibits and documents provided in the Mock Trial Tournament materials. Students may not create their own charts, graphs or any other visual aids for use in the courtroom in presenting their case. **Evidence is not to be enlarged, projected, marked or altered for use during the trial.**

### 7. SIGNALS AND COMMUNICATION

The team coaches, advisors, and spectators may not signal the team members (neither student attorneys nor witnesses) or communicate with them in any way during the trial, including but not limited to wireless devices and text messaging. The use of cellular telephones, laptop computers, or any other wireless devices by any student attorney or witness, other than a timekeeper for the purpose of keeping time during the trial, is strictly prohibited. The restriction upon the use of electronic devices during an enactment by a person other than a timekeeper should not be construed to prevent a county coordinator or other authorized tournament official from authorizing the use of such a device as a reasonable accommodation for a participant with a disability, where such use is required to ensure the person’s full and equal participation in the tournament. A student witness may talk to a student attorney on his/her team during a recess or during direct examination but may not communicate verbally or non-verbally with a student attorney on his/her team during the student witness’ cross-examination.

## 8. VIDEOTAPING/AUDIOTAPING

- a. During any tournament round, except State semi-finals and State finals, a trial may be videotaped or audio taped but only if each of the following conditions is satisfied:
  - i. The courthouse in which the tournament round is taking place must permit video or audio taping, and the team wishing to videotape or audiotape has received permission from the courthouse in advance of the trial. *We note that many State and Federal courthouses prohibit video or audio taping devices in the courthouse.*
  - ii. The judge consents before the beginning of the trial.
  - iii. The opposing team consents in writing prior to the time the trial begins. Written consents should be delivered to the County Coordinator. Fax or e-mail is acceptable.
  - iv. A copy of the video or audio tape must be furnished to the opposing team (at no cost) within 48 hours after the trial.
  - v. The video or audio tape may not be shared by either team with any other team in the competition.
- b. Video or audio taping of the State semi-finals and final rounds is **NOT** permitted by either team.

## 9. MOCK TRIAL COORDINATORS

The success of the New York State Mock Trial Program depends on the many volunteer county and regional coordinators. **The appropriate supervisor will be contacted if any representative from a high school, parent, coach, or team member addresses a mock trial volunteer or staff person at any level of the competition in an unprofessional or discourteous manner. County Coordinators may also refer any such matters to the Law, Youth and Citizenship Committee of the New York State Bar Association for appropriate action by the LYC Committee.**

Absent prior approval by the Mock Trial Subcommittee of the New York State Bar Association's *Law, Youth and Citizenship Committee*, a county or regional Mock Trial Tournament coordinator or assistant coordinator may not be an employee of a school that competes, or of a school district that includes a high school that competes, in that county or regional Mock Trial Tournament. Nothing in this rule shall prohibit an employee of a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) or the New York City Justice Resource Center from serving as a county or regional Mock Trial Tournament coordinator or assistant coordinator.

## 10. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF ATTORNEYS

- a. The attorney who makes the opening statement may not make the closing statement.
- b. Requests for bench conferences (i.e., conferences involving the Judge, attorney(s) for the plaintiff or the people and attorney(s) for the defendant) may be granted after the opening of court in a mock trial, but not before.
- c. Attorneys may use notes in presenting their cases, for opening statements, direct examination of witnesses, etc. Witnesses are **NOT** permitted to use notes while testifying during the trial.
- d. Each of the three attorneys on a team must conduct the direct examination of one witness and the cross examination of another witness.
- e. The attorney examining a particular witness must make the objections to that witness's cross-examination, and the attorney who will cross-examine a witness must make the objections to the witness's direct examination.

## 11. WITNESSES

- a. Each witness is bound by the facts of his/her affidavit or witness statement and any exhibit authored or produced by the witness that is relevant to his/her testimony. Witnesses may not invent any other testimony. However, in the event a witness is asked a question on cross examination, the answer to which is not contained in the witness's statement or was not testified to on direct examination, the witness may respond with any answer that does not materially alter the outcome of the trial.
- b. If there is an inconsistency between the witness statement or affidavit and the statement of facts or stipulated facts, the witness can only rely on, and is bound by, the information contained in his/her affidavit or witness statement.
- c. A witness is not bound by facts in other witnesses' affidavits or statements.
- d. If a witness contradicts a fact in his or her own witness statement, the opposition may impeach the testimony of that witness.
- e. A witness's physical appearance in the case is as he or she appears in the trial re-enactment. No costumes or props may be used.

- f. Witnesses, other than the plaintiff and the defendant, may be constructively sequestered from the courtroom at the request of opposing counsel. A constructively sequestered witness may not be asked on the stand about the testimony another witness may have given during the trial enactment. A team is **NOT** required to make a sequestration motion. However, if a team wishes to make such motion, it should be made during the time the team is introducing itself to the judge. Please note that while a witness may be constructively sequestered, said witness **WILL REMAIN** in the courtroom at all times. (Note: Since this is an educational exercise, no participant will actually be excluded from the courtroom during an enactment.)
- g. Witnesses shall not sit at the attorneys’ table.
- h. All witnesses are intended to be gender-neutral and can be played by any eligible student regardless of the student’s sex or gender identity.

## 12. PROTESTS

- a. Other than as set forth in 12(b) below, protests of judicial rulings are **NOT** allowed. **All judicial rulings are final and cannot be appealed.**
- b. Protests are highly disfavored and will only be allowed to address two issues:
  - (1) Cheating (a dishonest act by a team that has not been the subject of a prior judicial ruling)
  - (2) A conflict of interest or gross misconduct by a judge (e.g., where a judge is related to a team member). All protests must be made in writing and either faxed or emailed to the appropriate County Coordinator and to the teacher-coach of the opposing team. The County Coordinator will investigate the grounds for the protest and has the discretion to make a ruling on the protest or refer the matter directly to the LYC Committee. The County Coordinator’s decision can be appealed to the LYC Committee.
- c. Hostile or discourteous protests will not be considered.

## 13. JUDGING

**THE DECISIONS OF THE JUDGE ARE FINAL.**

## 14. ORDER OF THE TRIAL

The trial shall proceed in the following manner:

- Opening statement by plaintiff’s attorney/prosecuting attorney
- Opening statement by defense attorney
- Direct examination of first plaintiff/prosecution witness
- Cross-examination of first plaintiff/prosecution witness
- Re-direct examination of first plaintiff/prosecution witness, if requested
- Re-cross examination, if requested (but only if re-direct examination occurred)
- Direct examination of second plaintiff/prosecution witness
- Cross-examination of second plaintiff/prosecution witness
- Re-direct examination of second plaintiff/prosecution witness, if requested
- Re-cross examination, if requested (but only if re-direct examination occurred)
- Direct examination of third plaintiff/prosecution witness
- Cross-examination of third plaintiff/prosecution witness
- Re-direct examination of third plaintiff/prosecution witness, if requested
- Re-cross examination, if requested (but only if re-direct examination occurred)
- Plaintiff/prosecution rests
- Direct examination of first defense witness
- Cross-examination of first defense witness
- Re-direct examination of first defense witness, if requested
- Re-cross examination, if requested (but only if re-direct examination occurred)
- Direct examination of second defense witness
- Cross-examination of second defense witness
- Re-direct examination of second defense witness, if requested
- Re-cross examination, if requested (but only if re-direct examination occurred)
- Direct examination of third defense witness
- Cross-examination of third defense witness
- Re-direct examination of third defense witness, if requested
- Re-cross examination, if requested (but only if re-direct examination occurred)
- Defense rests
- Closing arguments by defense attorney
- Closing arguments by plaintiff’s attorney/prosecuting attorney

**15. TIME LIMITS**

- a. The following time limits apply:
  - Opening Statement .....5 minutes for each team
  - Direct Examination.....10 minutes for each witness
  - Cross Examination.....10 minutes for each witness
  - Closing Argument .....10 minutes for each team
  
- b. At all county and regional trials, the time will be kept by two timekeepers. Each team shall provide one of the timekeepers. Timekeeper shall be a student of the participating school. A school may use a student witness who is not a witness during a particular phase of the trial. (For example, a defense witness can keep time when the plaintiff/prosecution attorneys are presenting their case.)

The timekeepers will use one watch and shall agree as to when a segment of the trial (e.g., the direct examination of a witness) begins. When one minute remains in a segment, the timekeepers shall flash the “1 Minute Remaining” card (found in the *Appendices*), alerting the judge and the attorneys. The timekeepers will not stop the clock during objections, *voir dire* of witnesses or bench conferences.

Since the number of questions allowed on redirect and re-cross is limited to three, time limits are not necessary. Any dispute as to the timekeeping shall be resolved by the trial judge. The judge, in his/her sole discretion, may extend the time, having taken into account the time expended by objections, *voir dire* of witnesses and/or bench conferences, thereby allowing an attorney to complete a line of questioning.

**16. TEAM ATTENDANCE AT STATE FINALS ROUND**

Eight teams will advance to the State Finals. All eight teams are required to participate in all events associated with the Mock Trial Tournament, including attending the final round of the competition.

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