

# Notes to Judges

## Judging Guidelines

Mock Trial is most successful when judges are familiar with the witness statements and the rules of competition. Please take time before the competition to review both of these sections of the materials. Being prepared is the best way to honor the time and effort the students have given to the Mock Trial. Note that Mock Trial rules often differ from the rules in an actual court of law. Particularly, the evidence rules are simplified and modified.

The Mock Trial competition differs significantly from a real trial situation in the following ways:

- Students are prohibited from making objections or using trial procedures not listed in the Mock Trial materials. Students should request a bench conference (to be held in open court from counsel table) if they think the opposing attorneys are using trial procedures outside the rules.
- Students are limited to the information in the witness statements and fact situation. If a witness invents information, the opposing attorney may object on the grounds that the information is beyond the scope of the Mock Trial materials. The Presiding Judge is encouraged to request a bench conference (to be held in open court from counsel table) to ask the students to find where the information is included in the case materials.
- Exhibits should not be admitted into evidence merely because they are contained in the Mock Trial materials. Objections to admission of exhibits should be heard and argued.
- Mock Trial rounds are timed. Each team provides an official timekeeper for a trial for two total official timekeepers per trial. Timekeepers time all phases of the trial, including the final remarks.
- Students have been instructed to address their presentations to the judge and jury. The students will address the Presiding Judge as the judge in the case and the Scoring Judges as the jury.
- Each trial round should be completed in less than two hours. To keep the competition on schedule, please keep within the time limits set out in Rule 12. Objections stop the clock, so please be as efficient as possible when ruling while still allowing students to argue the objections.
- Judges shall not give an oral critique at the end of the trial. At the conclusion of the trial, each judge may offer a general congratulatory comment to each team. Substantive comments or constructive criticism should be included in the judges' ballots, at their discretion. Ballots will be shared with teams following the competition. See Rule 44. Additionally, judges shall not offer a verdict on the merits.

Each courtroom will be assigned a panel of three Scoring Judges. In extenuating circumstances, a courtroom may have only two Scoring Judges. See Rule 20.