



# Competition Day: What to Expect at Regional Competitions

## The Basics: What is Mock Trial?

A *Mock Trial* is a pretend trial and involves either civil or criminal cases, just like a real court. Federal rules and procedures are modified to simplify the process of Mock Trial. In Mock Trial the students present the case and act as the main characters in the courtroom. The purpose of Mock Trial is to learn about courtroom procedures and the people and rights involved with the legal system. It also teaches how to evaluate both sides of an issue and resolve conflicts in a nonviolent manner. A Mock Trial follows the trial procedure of the lower courts.

By incorporating Mock Trial, students learn about the basis of our American judicial system and the mechanics of litigation. In addition, students are encouraged to learn and understand the meaning of good citizenship in a democracy. Mock Trial is exciting to share in any classroom or club and it easily stimulates participation, critical thinking, speaking skills, and teamwork. Mock Trial is also available in many elementary, middle schools, high schools, and colleges throughout the state. And, graduating High School Mock Trial students are eligible for High School Mock Trial scholarships when continuing with higher education.

## Nametags:

There is a maximum number of 24 visitor badges allotted per team. No one can view any round without the matching visitor badges. All team members and visitors are identified accordingly with their respective team badges. Students have white pin-on name badges with two coded letters representing their team in an attempt to keep the school anonymous. The students' respective visitors, teachers, and attorney coaches are assigned the same two coded letters on their badges, but with their respective titles (visitor, teacher, or attorney coach). Note that if there are more than 16 students (MS) or 14 (HS) students on a team, the remaining students wear visitor badges. There are only 24 visitor badges total available to a team. Announcements at the awards ceremony begin after all badges have been collected.

**Room Assignments:** Should a team become disqualified or fail to arrive to compete for an unforeseen circumstance, room assignments change and are announced as soon as possible.

## Judging/Scoring:

Each trial has a presiding judge overseeing the trial and a minimum of two and maximum of three scoring judges serving as the jury. The scoring judges use the Mock Trial scoresheet to determine how each team performs their knowledge and understanding of the case itself and the trial process, not guilt or innocence. The scoring judges also determine the most effective witness and most effective attorney for each round. Should there only be two judges serving as jury members or an emergency with the third scoring judge, the scores are averaged for a third scoresheet and the presiding judge determines which team wins the third ballot. Scoresheets are mailed following all regional competitions and after all scoresheets have been verified. Scoresheets cannot be picked up in person, faxed, scanned, or e-mailed.

## Introductions:

Once teams are in their respective courtrooms, students are asked to address the presiding judge and scoring judges providing only their names and roles in the competition (not their school name) at the beginning of each round.

## Communication:

Any communication that takes place over the bar subjects the team to a strong point deduction or even disqualification. Visitors, coaches, and non-competing team members are to refrain from all communication with competing team members unless directed by the presiding judge. Any communication with the State and/or Regional Mock Trial Coordinators is made solely by the lead teacher/attorney coach. Any communication not from the lead teacher/attorney coach to the Regional and/or State Coordinator is considered to be in non-compliance of Rule 3.9 (Communication with Mock Trial Coordinators) and is subject to Rule 6.4 (Discipline for Non-Trial Violations). This rule is in place before and during the competition. All post-competition communication is solely by the lead teacher coach and/or attorney coach directed to the State Coordinator only. There is no reaching out to judges or Regional Coordinators post competition. Any post-competition communication not directed to the State Coordinator subjects the team to penalties up to disqualification at the next level of competition or the following school year depending on if team advances to the state competition. Coaches are strongly discouraged from discussing rounds with other coaches during the state competition weekend.

**Transitioning In and Out of Courtrooms:** Visitors are asked to be respectful of both teams competing and only enter or exit the courtroom during a transition. A transition is when a witness is getting on or off the witness stand.

## Recess:

During the competition, up to a five minute recess is provided prior to the closing arguments. Competing teams are to remain in front of the bar and are not permitted to leave the courtroom. Competing teams may only communicate with their team members in front of the bar – no one behind the bar including coaches, remaining team members and/or visitors. The only people permitted to leave the courtroom during the recess are the people behind the bar. It is asked that everyone who chooses to remain in the courtroom stay seated quietly to allow the students in front of the bar to regroup for the closing arguments. For virtual competitions, there is no five minute recess.

## Photography/Videography:

Video cameras and non-flash photography may be used during the competition only with the consent of the presiding judge and the opposing team. Flash pictures may not be taken during the competition at any time. Upon approval of video cameras and non-flash photography, persons may take stationary pictures from the seated position. No movement in the courtroom for pictures is permitted. Team pictures are taken during the day by the lead teacher coach and texted to the regional coordinator during the day of the competition.

## Number of Rounds:

If there is an even number of teams in a region, then there are three rounds with all teams competing in all three rounds. If there is an odd number of teams at a competition, see Rule 5.8 (Effect of Bye Round). Bye round means that one team is sitting out every round since there is an uneven number of teams. Bye teams may use this round time to prepare for their next competitive round. A round intended for a team to sit out cannot be attached to a lunch period. This mechanism is in place to ensure all teams have equal treatment. Students found roaming the halls during a round that they are not competing in are subject to penalties, as respect and silence is needed for the other teams competing. Working diligently to keep the hallways as quiet as possible is greatly appreciated.

## Lunch / Snacks:

There is no eating permitted in most courthouses. Teams are also notified in advance that there is an undetermined start time for lunch, but teams need to plan for lunch at the first break only. The second break is shortened and intended for snacks only. There are very few, if any, restaurants within walking distance of the competition locations. Teams are to stay on the competition grounds and coaches/visitors either bring prepared food for lunch or go and pick up lunches for the team. Remember when planning for this lunch, students are to be seated in their respective courtrooms 15 minutes prior to each round and should plan on allowing time to re-enter the courthouse security. For virtual, teams should be online and registered 30 minutes prior to the next round.

## Closing Assembly:

After competing in the rounds, everyone reports to the assigned location for the closing assembly. During the waiting period that can range from thirty minutes to an hour, staff is working diligently to tally up scoresheets and check scores for accuracy. During the waiting period, coaches complete evaluations and collect team and visitor badges. The closing assembly starts after each team submits their red registration bag with all contents including clipboards, folders and team and visitor badges. The only thing removed from the red registration bag should be the certificates.

The closing assembly begins with the announcements of the most effective witnesses and most effective attorneys awarded by the scoring judges from each round. Award nominations made by the students in the courtrooms after each round are not re-announced at this assembly. In addition, the Professionalism and Civility Award determined by team nominations is awarded. The closing assembly concludes with the Regional Coordinator announcing the "proposed" advancing team to represent their region at the state competition. In addition to announcing the proposed regional winner, the next two highest ranking teams are announced as information only. Being announced as second and third place teams does not guarantee automatic advancement to the state competition. With one top proposed team from each regional competition announced, the remaining wild card teams are announced the Tuesday following the regional competitions by 5pm. There is a total of twelve teams competing in the state competition. With five regional winners, there will be seven wild card teams and three backup teams announced. See Rule 5.5 (Team Advancement to the State Competition) for clarification.

**Scoresheets are reconfirmed following all regional competitions and the official teams are announced no later than the Tuesday following the last regional competition weekend by 5pm on the SC Bar Web site at [www.sctbar.org/lre](http://www.sctbar.org/lre). Until certified by the SC Bar, advancing teams are not finalized. The SC Bar reserves the right to correct any errors or omissions; therefore, any announcement of a team as advancing to the next level is subject to correction.**

## State Competition:

**Middle School:** December 11 and 12, 2020 – Columbia

**High School:** March 12 and 13, 2021 – Columbia

There is a separate registration fee of \$150 for teams competing in the state competition. Lodging the Friday night of the competition may be needed for some teams as the competition takes place over two days. Teams are on their own for meals. Should a school not be able to afford the expenditures associated with this competition and forfeit their slot, the slot is offered to the next team according to rankings in the entire state. A school cannot forfeit their slot past the drop deadline date provided each year.

## Each Trial Has the Following Order of Events:

- Teams find courtrooms and have fifteen minutes to prepare
- Teams complete practice scoresheets and distribute accordingly
- Teams find proper seating placement including timekeepers
- Plaintiff / Prosecution's Bailiff meets with presiding judge outside of the courtroom
- Scoring judges serving as the judges enter
- Bailiff announces the presiding judge
- Presiding judge conducts welcome
- Scoring judges introduce themselves
- Performing students introduce themselves to the scoring judges
- Opening statements from each side
- Bailiff swears in all witnesses
- Direct / Cross Examinations for both sides
- 5 minutes recess (only visitors can leave the courtroom – not the competing students)
- Closing arguments from each side
- Any violations are reported at this time to the presiding judge
- Scoring judges leave the courtroom
- Teams nominate and present a most effective attorney and witness certificates to the opposing team
- Trial is officially over
- Once the trial is officially over, the team can remain quietly in the courtroom or outside. Teams in hallways should be very quiet as other trials may still be in progress. (Teams cannot go to their next assigned courtroom until the next pairings are announced.)

