

TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL MOCK TRIAL CHAMPIONSHIP

CRITERIA FOR SCORING A TRIAL PRESENTATION

The following criteria should be considered during the course of a team's trial presentation. Consider "5" as average. This list is designed to serve as a guideline. All points accessed in a round are subjective.

Opening Statement

- Provided a case overview
- The theme/theory of the case was identified
- Mentioned the key witnesses
- Provided a clear and concise description of their team's side of the case
- Stated the relief requested
- Discussed the burden of proof
- Presentation was non argumentative
- Points may be deducted for use of notes, at the Scoring Judge's discretion

Direct Examinations

- Properly phrased questions
- Used proper courtroom procedure
- Handled objections appropriately and effectively and did not overuse objections
- Did not ask questions that called for an unfair extrapolation from the witness
- Demonstrated an understanding of the Modified Federal Rules of Evidence
- Handled physical evidence appropriately and effectively (Rule 4.20)

Cross Examinations

- Properly phrased questions
- Effective questioning
- Properly impeached witnesses
- Handled objections appropriately and effectively
- Did not overuse objections
- Used various techniques, as necessary, to handle a non-responsive witness
- Demonstrated an understanding of the Modified Federal Rules of Evidence
- Handled physical evidence appropriately and effectively (Rule 4.20)

Witness Performance

- Did not use notes (as is required)
- Credible portrayal of character
- Showed understanding of the facts
- Sounded spontaneous, not memorized
- Demonstrated appropriate courtroom decorum
- Avoided unnecessarily long and/or non-responsive answers on cross-examination
- Use of unfair extrapolations, for which points should be deducted

Closing Statement

- Theme/theory continued in closing argument
- Summarized the evidence
- Emphasized the supporting points of their own case and damaged the opponent's case
- Concentrated on the important, not the trivial
- Applied the applicable law
- Discussed burden of proof
- Responded to judge's questions with poise
- Overall, the closing statement was persuasive
- There should be only a minimal reliance on notes during the closing statement
- Points should be deducted if closing argument exceeds time limit

Tiebreaker

The team with the higher number of points shall win the ballot. Place a "P" or "D" in the Tiebreaker Box on the ballot to indicate which side has the higher number of points; the team winning the majority of the ballots shall win the round.

EXPLANATION OF THE PERFORMANCE RATINGS USED ON THE SCORESHEET

Individual participants will be rated on a scale of 1 – 10 speaker points, according to their roles in the trial. The Scoring Judge is scoring individual performance in each speaker category. The scoring judge is NOT scoring the legal merits of the case.

Scoring Judges may recognize outstanding individual presentations by selecting one OUTSTANDING ADVOCATE and one OUTSTANDING WITNESS per round. Each Scoring Judge determines individually which student will receive his/her vote; however, the entire judging panel may confer on this matter.

Scoring Judges may individually consider penalties for violation of the Rules of the competition. Penalties would reduce point awards in the appropriate performance categories below. Penalties will not be indicated separately on the score sheet.

<u>POINTS</u>	<u>PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING STUDENT PERFORMANCE</u>
1 – 2	Not Effective	Unsure of self, illogical, uninformed, not prepared, speaks incoherently, and ineffective in communication
3 – 4	Fair	Minimally informed and prepared. Performance is passable, but lacks depth in terms of knowledge of task and materials; communications lack clarity and conviction
5 – 6	Good	Good, solid, but less than spectacular performance; can perform outside of written notes, but with less confidence than when using written notes; logic and organization are adequate, but does not convey mastery of same; communications are clear and understandable, but could be stronger in fluency and persuasiveness
7 – 8	Excellent	Fluent, persuasive, clear and understandable; well organized materials and thoughts; exhibits mastery of the case and materials; thinks quickly and spontaneously; does not read from notes
9-10	Outstanding	Exceptional presentation; flawless; superior in qualities listed for performance meriting 7-8 points

The team with the higher number of points shall win the ballot (and shall be entered in the Tiebreaker Box on the ballot; the team winning the majority of the ballots shall win the round.

Scoring Judges are reminded to tally all scores, check totals closely, and sign the score sheet before returning the score sheet to competition headquarters.