



2021 Ohio Mock Trial Virtual Competition Format

Updated 10/14/2020

This is complete, to the best of our knowledge and capacity at this moment. All rules, dates, deadlines, and procedures are subject to change based on new information, changing guidelines, or other concerns. A number of factors influence decisions made about this process, including number of teams, staff capacity, available volunteers, technological capabilities, and costs.

**Updates are integrated below in red text.*

Please Note: *In instances of conflict, the 2021 virtual competition rules will prevail. In instances where the virtual rules do not cover a specific instance, the standard rules prevail.*

Due to the large number of trials needed, the competitions will be held over successive days. Teams will be given a choice of competition day, in order of registration, on a space available basis*.

- **Districts:** January 22, 23, 28, 30
 - Teams must be available from 8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
 - Each day will consist of two time blocks; one AM block and one PM block.
 - Teams will be randomly assigned to one of the time blocks. Team assignments will be posted on the mock trial website on January 8.

- **Regionals:** February 19, 20

**Team registration will be available on Wednesday, October 14. We encourage advisors to speak with their administration and students before registering.*

- Team rosters must be submitted by **January 8**. All students, team advisors, and legal advisors must be listed.

◆ Trials will be held online, via Zoom

- We recognize that some schools may have existing policies that disallow using zoom for academics. Zoom is the most amenable format for what we need and is therefore going to be our standard. We recommend that teams with this restriction reach out to their administration to apply for exemptions. We will provide a letter

- explaining the security protocols that will be in place to address concerns with the platform (e.g. waiting rooms, password protection, facilitator monitoring, etc.)
- Teams are required to join the Zoom meeting from the app rather than the web browser.
 - Teams will receive guidance regarding protocols, zoom etiquette, and other instructions in advance of the competition (e.g. mute/unmute, proper name formats, common audio/video glitches, etc.).
 - A volunteer facilitator will be assigned to oversee no more than 4 simultaneous breakout rooms. The facilitator will serve as a first line of assistance for tech difficulties.
 - If needed, *facilitators* will contact OCLRE staff to join the meeting and assist. Team advisors should not reach out to OCLRE directly to help streamline communication and problem-solving.
- ◆ To the greatest extent possible, the virtual trials should follow the format of the traditional in-person trials. In instances where the virtual rules do not cover a scenario, the standard competition rules prevail.
 - Example: Attorneys should follow the standard procedure for objections, stating their objection aloud and waiting for recognition from the presiding judge, with the exception that they may remain seated so that they are still on-camera.
 - The scoring elements, guidelines, and procedures will remain the same. The score sheet, however, will look different because it will be formatted digitally.
 - ◆ Tentative procedure for showing exhibits and witness statements during trial:
 - Students will be permitted to use screen-share to display the document to the court.
 - The standard rules that the document be unaltered will still prevail, and the prohibition on demonstratives will still prevail.
 - ◆ Rules regarding advisor/team communication during trials are still applicable in this format!
 - The chat feature will be disabled during all trials.
 - ◆ In the event of technical difficulties (e.g. a student is bumped from a meeting, has a camera freeze, etc.) the student should contact the team's timekeeper/bailiff who will be responsible for notifying the judges of the technical issue. **If the timekeeper bailiff is the one experiencing technical issues the responsibility of alerting the presiding judge falls to one of the two team attorneys.**
 - Once a technical issue has been brought to the attention of the judges, advisors may step-in to help the student resolve the issue.
 - As with objections, the clock will stop to allow for troubleshooting.
 - The 2-hour overall limit still applies to the trials.
 - OCLRE, in consultation with the Competition Committee, reserves the right to take other appropriate measures to resolve technical issues impacting the fairness of a trial.

- ◆ In the event of a catastrophic technical failure, such as a power outage or internet outage, the team advisor must contact OCLRE to describe the issue. OCLRE will then contact the Competition Committee to create a solution that complies with competition rules.
- ◆ Photo releases must be submitted electronically to OCLRE no later than January 8th.
 - If a photo release has not been submitted for a student, **they are ineligible to compete.**
 - Parents/Guardians can select “no” but must still submit the form.
- ◆ Teams will have flexibility regarding the tech *equipment* they would like to use in joining the zoom meetings.
 - e.g. Schools that permit in-person gatherings can choose to join the meeting via 1-2 devices for the whole team or can chose to have each student on their own device in separate locations.
 - Research thus far has shown that participants will experience technical difficulties using Chromebooks and when joining meetings using the browser rather than the application. Zoom continues to update their software and servers, so this advice may change in advance of the competition.
- ◆ Practice tech sessions will be made available to teams to troubleshoot their devices in advance of the scheduled trials.
 - These will be open practice sessions, scheduled throughout the months of December and January.
 - Practice sessions are intended to *troubleshoot technology* and will not be used for scrimmaging or team practices.
 - **When participating in these sessions, it is critical that teams join using the tech set-up they intend to use on competition day!**
 - Teams may attend multiple tech practices as needed.
 - Tech sessions will require pre-registration (can register up to 1 hour before the scheduled session) in order to allow for security protocols.
- ◆ Trials will occur in breakout rooms within Zoom, grouped by volunteer facilitators.
 - Students must ensure in advance of trials that the device they plan to use for the meetings is capable of joining breakout rooms (e.g. joining from a web browser often causes technical issues in breakout rooms).
 - Team advisors will be sent a Zoom meeting link for each of their trials.
 - Only names appearing on the official roster for each team (including advisors/legal advisors) will be admitted to the meeting from the waiting room and assigned to the trial breakout room.
 - Teams will be responsible for ensuring that they are joining the correct meeting at least 15 minutes prior to the designated trial start time.
- ◆ Spectators will not be permitted to join meetings “live”, but recording will be permitted to share with students’ supporters.
 - The rule regarding recording in the case file still applies. During pre-trial, if any member of any team objects to recording, or if a guardian has checked “no” on the photo release form, recording will not be permitted in that trial.

- ◆ All trial components, including judge scoring and comments, must fit within the standard 2-hour time limit
- ◆ Judge score sheets will be completed electronically and automatically submitted to OCLRE.
 - OCLRE is in the process of vetting and testing electronic scoring options. More information about procedures will be announced prior to the first competition date.
 - Scoresheets will be shared with advisors as soon after each competition day as possible, but no later than 7 calendar days from the day on which the team competed.
- ◆ The evening of each competition day, OCLRE will hold a live broadcast to announce the advancing teams, and the winners of Outstanding Attorney and Outstanding Witness awards.
- ◆ **Each school is limited to registering three teams for the competition.**
 - We encourage schools to hold internal scrimmages and try-outs to choose the students who will represent the school in this year's competition.
 - Recognizing pressures on district budgets, and cost saving measures offered by the online format, the price per team has been reduced to \$100 team for members.
 - Important dates/deadlines are listed in the case file and should be reviewed carefully prior to registration! Please also monitor your email and the mock trial website for any updates or changes.
- ◆ Schools will, on a first-come first-served basis, have the option to choose the day(s) that they will compete for the District competition.
 - Schools can choose from: Friday 1/22, Saturday 1/23, **Thursday 1/28**, Saturday 1/30
 - Note: this is a date change from prior communication
 - Teams will compete in two trials.
 - On each day there will be two competition blocks (8:00 – 12:30, 1:00-5:30).
 - Teams must be available for either block on the day on which they register.
 - Teams will be notified of their assigned trial times January 15.
 - Schools fielding more than one team may be required to compete on different days, based on available space.
 - Each team must be registered separately to ensure that registration dates are properly filled.
 - We reserve the right to cancel any of these days due to lack of registrations.
 - In the event that teams need to be reassigned to a different day (in order to balance the number of teams/available volunteers, etc.) they will be assigned based on order of registration (last in, first out).
 - Teams may, as in the traditional competition, be asked to double in order to balance the number of teams during any trial time.
- ◆ Per competition rule 4(a)(iv) at the District level teams will be matched at random, with the exception that schools with a total of two teams shall not be paired against themselves.
 - Schools fielding three teams will be paired completely at random with no protection preventing them from playing another team from their school.
- ◆ Pairings at all levels will be made without regard to geographic region.

- No requests for pairings, or side-playing-first will be accepted at any level of competition.
- ◆ Teams winning both trials at the District level will advance to the Regional competition.
- ◆ Advancing teams **will be assigned** to compete on either February 19 or 20 at random.
 - The protection against teams playing themselves for schools with two teams **does not apply at the Regional level.**
- ◆ We recognize that many regions have specific traditions (e.g. team photos, perpetual plaques by county, etc.). To the greatest extent possible, OCLRE will work with District and Regional coordinators to maintain and modify those traditions to fit into the virtual competition format.
- ◆ We have not yet made a decision regarding the State Finals, nor the MSMT Showcase
 - We will make the decision in the Winter based on best practices and recommendation of health officials/government restrictions