

# 2022 Ohio Mock Trial Virtual Competition Format

**Updated 12/15/21**

*(Updates are indicated with red text)*

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.

***If you have questions or concerns regarding any of the following rules and guidelines, please contact Danielle Wilmot directly ([dwilmot@ocle.org](mailto:dwilmot@ocle.org)). We will update the rules, as needed, in the same way we update the errata; bi-weekly based on advisor feedback.***

***Please Note: In instances of conflict, the 2022 virtual competition rules will prevail. In instances where the virtual rules do not cover a specific instance, the standard rules prevail.***

- **Districts:**
  - January 13, 2021
    - Only ONE time block
      - 11:45 a.m. – Teams join Zoom (late entries will be disqualified)
        - Participants rename and move to breakout rooms
      - 12:00 p.m. – Judges join Zoom
        - Judges rename and move to breakout rooms
      - 12:15-2:45 p.m. – TRIAL I
      - 3:00-5:30 p.m. – TRIAL II
    - January 14, 2021
      - AM Time Block
        - 8:15 a.m. – Teams join Zoom (late entries will be disqualified)
          - Participants rename and move to breakout rooms
        - 8:30 a.m. – Judges join Zoom
          - Judges rename and move to breakout rooms
        - 8:45-11:15 a.m. – TRIAL I
        - 11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – LUNCH
        - 12:00-2:30 p.m. – TRIAL II

- PM Time Block
      - 12:30 p.m. – Teams join Zoom (late entries will be disqualified)
        - Participants rename and move to breakout rooms
      - 12:45 p.m. – Judges join Zoom
        - Judges rename and move to breakout rooms
      - 1:00-3:30 p.m. – Trial 1
      - 3:45-6:15 p.m. – Trial 2
  - January 21, 2021
    - AM Time Block
      - 8:15 a.m. – Teams join Zoom (late entries will be disqualified)
        - Participants rename and move to breakout rooms
      - 8:30 a.m. – Judges join Zoom
        - Judges rename and move to breakout rooms
      - 8:45-11:15 a.m. – TRIAL I
      - 11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – LUNCH
      - 12:00-2:30 p.m. – TRIAL II
    - PM Time Block
      - 12:30 p.m. – Teams join Zoom (late entries will be disqualified)
        - Participants rename and move to breakout rooms
      - 12:45 p.m. – Judges join Zoom
        - Judges rename and move to breakout rooms
      - 1:00-3:30 p.m. – Trial 1
      - 3:45-6:15 p.m. – Trial 2
  - January 22, 2021
    - Only ONE time block
      - 11:45 a.m. – Teams join Zoom (late entries will be disqualified)
        - Participants rename and move to breakout rooms
      - 12:00 p.m. – Judges join Zoom
        - Judges rename and move to breakout rooms
      - 12:15-2:45 p.m. – TRIAL I
      - 3:00-5:30 p.m. – TRIAL II
- **Regionals: February 18**
  - AM Time Block
    - 8:15 a.m. – Teams join Zoom (late entries will be disqualified)
      - Participants rename and move to breakout rooms
    - 8:30 a.m. – Judges join Zoom
      - Judges rename and move to breakout rooms
    - 8:45-11:15 a.m. – TRIAL I
    - 11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – LUNCH
    - 12:00-2:30 p.m. – TRIAL II
  - PM Time Block
    - 12:30 p.m. – Teams join Zoom (late entries will be disqualified)
      - Participants rename and move to breakout rooms

- 12:45 p.m. – Judges join Zoom
  - Judges rename and move to breakout rooms
- 1:00-3:30 p.m. – Trial 1
- 3:45-6:15 p.m. – Trial 2
- Teams must be available for both time blocks (from 8:15 a.m. – 6:15 p.m.) until they know their assignment.
  - OCLRE will post time block assignments by February 4, 2022.
  - Assignments will be made randomly.

## I. Rules of Competition

- a. Team registration is taken on a first-come, first-served basis until we have reached capacity.
  - i. Schools may choose their date for their first two teams at the ***district*** competition only. Dates will automatically fall off once they have been filled.
    1. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> teams will be assigned by OCLRE based on space available.
  - ii. OCLRE will assign teams to one of the two time blocks for the regional competition on February 18.
- b. **Each school is limited to registering two teams for the first round of registrations.**
  - i. If additional space is available 3 weeks after registration opens, we will allow schools to register an additional two teams on a space available basis.
  - ii. We encourage schools to hold internal scrimmages and try-outs to choose the students who will represent the school in this year's competition.
- c. Schools fielding more than one team may be required to compete on different days, based on available space.
  - i. Each team must be registered separately to ensure that registration dates are properly filled.
- d. OCLRE reserves the right to cancel any of the competition days due to lack of registrations.
  - i. 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).
- e. Teams may, as in the traditional competition, be asked to double in order to balance the number of teams during any trial time.
- f. Per competition rule IV(a)(iv) on page 14, 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.
  - i. Schools fielding more than two teams will be paired completely at random with no protection preventing them from playing another team from their school.

- g. **Pairings at all levels will be made without regard to geographic region.**
  - i. Example: A team from Lucas County may be paired against a team from Tuscarawas County.
  - ii. No requests for pairings, or side-playing-first will be accepted at any level of competition.
- h. Teams winning both trials or the majority of ballots at the district level will advance to the Regional competition.
  - i. Advancing teams **will be assigned** to compete in either the AM or PM time block on February 18. An additional date may be added if necessary.
  - ii. The protection against teams playing themselves for schools with two teams **does not apply at the Regional level.**
- i. OCLRE will not record trials at the district competition. Therefore, we will not collect photo releases for the district competition. If a parent/guardian has concerns about their student appearing on camera during the virtual competition, the team advisor must notify Danielle Wilmot (dwilmot@oclr.org) no later than Monday, January 10, 2022.

## II. Trial/Procedural Rules

- a. 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.
  - i. ***Please review the condensed trial sequence on page 33 of the case file. The virtual competition will still follow this model.***
  - ii. OCLRE added lead-in time to the trial before judges enter the room. During this time, teams must confer with each other to share which witnesses each side will call along with which attorneys will examine/cross-examine those witnesses.
    - 1. OCLRE will provide a shared Google Doc to organize this information.
    - 2. Teachers must assign a student on each team to talk with the opposing team and designate another student to record this information on the shared document.
- b. The scoring elements, guidelines, and procedures will remain the same. The score sheet, however, will look different because it will be formatted digitally.
- c. Teams will compete in two trials, presenting a different side of the case in each trial.
- d. Team communication
  - i. If students are connecting to Zoom separately, student attorneys may **only** communicate with each other through Zoom chat by sending a private message to their co-counsel. (This is intended to take the place of in-person communication that would normally happen at the counsel table.)

1. If student attorneys are competing in-person, co-counsel may communicate as they normally would during an in-person competition.
  - ii. If a teammate needs to communicate a technical issue with the timekeeper/bailiff, they should use Zoom chat by sending a private message.
    1. If a student is kicked out of the Zoom meeting entirely, another student on the team should notify the timekeeper so the issue can be raised to the presiding judge. The issue should then be discussed in open court to keep the presiding judge and all competitors informed of the plan to rectify the technical issue.
  - iii. Rules regarding advisor/team communication during trials are still applicable in this format!
- e. All trial components, including judge scoring and comments, must fit within the standard 2-hour time limit
- f. Judge score sheets will be completed electronically and automatically submitted to OCLRE.
  - i. 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.
- g. Changes for virtual competition:
  - i. Teams are permitted to have non-rostered students or school personnel assist them with their AV/technology needs.
    1. If teams choose to do this, they must introduce these individuals during pre-trial so that judges and the opposing team are made aware.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. When objecting, attorneys should simply say “objection” or “objection your honor” and wait to be recognized before stating the grounds for their objections. All students should stop speaking, including the witness and examining attorney, in order for the judge to promptly and appropriately respond.
  - iv. Opening the Court – The traditional script for this portion has been revised to accommodate the virtual format. Please refer to the updated script below:
    1. “Hear ye, hear ye, the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Ohio, Columbus, Ohio is open pursuant to adjournment. All having business before this honorable court draw near, give attention, and you shall be heard.”
- v. Exhibits/witness statements

1. If referencing/showing an exhibit or witness statement, students must use the screen-share feature to display the item for the court.
  2. Any *rostered* student on the team may screen share the necessary documents.
  3. The procedure for introducing exhibits and witness statements remains the same as it would be during an in-person competition. Please refer to the traditional mock trial rules.
  4. The standard rules that the document be unaltered will still prevail, and the prohibition on demonstratives will still prevail.
  5. A PDF of exhibits only and witness statements only is available on the Case File tab. Students are welcome to use this document during trial.
- vi. Timekeepers will hold their timecards up to their camera to display time remaining. They **may** also put this information in the Zoom chat by sending a message to everyone.
1. It is not required for timekeepers to put time remaining in the chat, it is at the team's discretion.
- vii. Students are not required to wear name tags for the virtual competition. Attorneys for each team should introduce their teammates prior to the start of trial.
- viii. **Each team is permitted one spectator/observer log-in for Zoom. Teams may use this log-in to project the trial for anyone who wishes to observe.**
- ix. OCLRE will announce advancing teams on the following schedule
1. Tuesday, January 18 – Advancing teams from 1/13 and 1/14
  2. Tuesday, January 25 – Advancing teams from 1/21 and 1/22
- x. OCLRE will make every effort to also announce outstanding attorney and outstanding witness awards at the time advancing teams are announced but will notify teams no later than 7 days after competition.

### III. Zoom Information

- a. Trials will be held online, via Zoom
  - i. OCLRE recognizes that some schools may have existing policies that disallow using Zoom for academics. Zoom is the most amenable format for OCLRE to manage competition logistics and will therefore 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.)
- b. Teams are required to join the Zoom meeting from the app rather than the web browser.

- c. 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.).
  - i. During the trial, team members who are not actively speaking should turn off their camera and microphone.
    - 1. Timekeepers are an exception to this rule. Teams may choose whether timekeepers should remain on camera (microphone muted) for the entire time or they may turn their camera on when displaying timecards.
      - a. This must be agreed upon by both teams during pre-trial.
  - ii. The presiding judge will be on camera at all times.
- d. Naming conventions
  - i. All teams will be given a team code and trial number when they receive a link to their Zoom meeting. The trial number and team code are necessary for changing each Zoom display name so that teams are placed in the correct breakout room.
  - ii. The naming convention is:
    - (Trial # - Team Code) First Name, Last Name (Role or Witness Name)**
    - 1. **Ex:** If I am playing River Foley in trial 3 and my team code is AA, my name should appear as:  
**(3 – AA) Danielle Wilmot (River Foley)**
    - 2. If I am an attorney, my name should appear as:  
**(3 – AA) Danielle Wilmot (Attorney)**
    - 3. If I am an advisor, my name should appear as:  
**(3 – AA) Danielle Wilmot (Advisor)**
    - 4. If I am a non-performing student on the team, my name should appear as:  
**(3 – AA) Danielle Wilmot (Team)**
    - 5. If students are sharing a device, or if the entire team will appear on one device, the name should appear in one of the following formats:  
**(3 – AA) Attorneys**  
**(3 – AA) Witnesses**  
**(3 – AA) Full Team**
- e. 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.
- f. Trials will occur in breakout rooms within Zoom, grouped by volunteer facilitators.
  - i. 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).
  - ii. Team advisors will be sent a Zoom meeting link for each of their trials.

- iii. Only names appearing on the official roster for each team (including advisors/legal advisors and school administrators) will be admitted to the meeting from the waiting room and assigned to the trial breakout room.
  - iv. Teams will be responsible for ensuring that they are joining the correct meeting at least 15 minutes prior to the designated trial start time.
- g. Spectators will not be permitted to join meetings “live,” but recording will be permitted to share with students’ supporters.
  - i. 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.
- h. Virtual backgrounds/Zoom set up
  - i. OCLRE is not stipulating the physical set up or Zoom set up for trial. Schools and students have differing access to technology and different devices, so it is up to each team to determine what works best.
  - ii. Judges have been instructed to **neither award nor subtract** points based on a student’s Zoom connection, background, or anything related to appearance. Rather, judges are instructed to only evaluate students based on their performance.

#### IV. Technology – Preparation and Troubleshooting

- a. 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.
  - i. Participating team members may use the **public** chat feature to notify the timekeeper or student attorney if there are technical issues.
    - 1. If the student experiencing the tech issue is unable to access the Zoom chat, they are permitted to notify the timekeeper member via text message or other means of communication provided it does not disrupt the trial.
  - ii. Once a technical issue has been brought to the attention of the judges, advisors may step in to help the student resolve the issue.
  - iii. As with objections, the clock will stop to allow for troubleshooting.
    - 1. The 2-hour overall limit still applies to trials.
  - iv. 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.
- b. 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.



- c. Teams will have flexibility regarding the tech *equipment* they would like to use in joining the zoom meetings.
  - i. If needed to reduce feedback/background noise, students are permitted to wear headsets during trial.
  - ii. Schools can choose to join the meeting via 1-2 devices for the whole team or can choose to have each student on their own device in separate locations.
    - 1. We ***strongly prefer*** that teams join from 1-2 devices with students in a single location. This reduces the likelihood of technical issues and makes it easier for judges to follow the trial. OCLRE will share further guidance on this setup.
    - 2. ***It is crucial that you test your setup prior to the competition!*** There will be limited time to troubleshoot technical issues on competition day.
  - iii. 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.
- d. Practice tech sessions will be made available to teams to troubleshoot their devices in advance of the scheduled trials.
  - i. These will be open practice sessions, scheduled throughout the months of December and January.
  - ii. Practice sessions are intended to *troubleshoot technology* and will not be used for scrimmaging or team practices.
  - iii. **When participating in these sessions, it is critical that teams join using the tech set-up they intend to use on competition day!**
  - iv. Teams may attend multiple tech practices as needed.
  - v. Tech sessions will require pre-registration (can register up to 1 hour before the scheduled session) to allow for security protocols.

## V. Additional Information

- a. 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.
- b. We have not yet decided the format of the state competition. We will make the decision in early 2022 based on advisor and volunteer feedback as well as capacity or other restrictions of host sites.