

High School Mock Trial – Rule Change Summary

Team and Roster Rule Changes - OCLRE released these rule changes related to forming teams in an email to Advisors at the start of the school year.

1. **Team Limits** - OCLRE has worked with our sponsors, county coordinators, and community partners to determine capacity for this program season. Schools will be permitted to register a *maximum of three teams* for the 2025-2026 Mock Trial Competition. *Remember that schools fielding more than one team may be placed outside their home county and/or at multiple sites.*
2. **Team Eligibility** - Schools wishing to field three teams must have at least one team with 9 students.
3. **Protection Against Playing Oneself** - All teams will receive protection from playing their own school at the district level of competition. No such protection will apply at regionals or states.
4. **Maximum Site Composition** - No single school will exceed 40% of a District competition site. As a result, schools fielding more than one team may be required to travel to alternate sites or split between two sites.

Eliminating the Play-In Round of the Competition

- If fewer than eight teams win both trials, advancing teams will be selected from amongst the teams with a 1-1 record as indicated below:
 - First, the percentage of ballots won (i.e. judges scoring that team as the winner) at all levels of competition (District, Regional, and State) will be calculated. The number of teams needed shall be taken from that pool, in order of percentage of ballots won.
 - If teams are tied for the percentage of ballots won, the average point total from across all levels of competition will be used to break the tie.
 - If a tie still persists, the remaining vacancies will be drawn at random from among the tied teams.
- If more than 8 teams win both trials, the eight quarterfinalist teams will be determined using the procedures below:
 - All 2-0 teams will be ranked in order of percentage of ballots won across all levels of competition (District, Regional, and State). The 8 quarterfinalists will be determined based on this ranking
 - In the event of a tie in percentage of ballots won, the average point total from across all levels of competition will be used to break the tie.

Role of Awards

- Awards will play no role in tiebreaking or advancement of decisions at any level of competition.

Clarification on Material Rule Violation

- A Material Rule Violation is (1) a violation of a competition rule that (2) *affects the fairness of the trial*.
 - If the majority agrees that a competition rule was violated, but that it did not affect the fairness of the trial, it is ***not material*** and, therefore, no deduction will be taken.
 - One example of a Material Rule Violation which a panel ***may*** find to be material is a witness using notes during examination, or a team using three attorneys instead of the designated two attorneys.

Clarification on witnesses behind counsel table

- In instances where one or more of the witnesses are a party to the case (e.g. as a defendant, a plaintiff, etc.) they will sit with all other witnesses to be called in the case. The only students permitted at counsel table will be students playing the role of counsel in the trial.

Clarification on role of advisors

- During the post-trial objection phase of the trial, attorneys may communicate with any rostered team member or advisor.
 - Communication may not include the passing of notes, scripting of objections, or other such prepared communication provided to any team member.

Clarification on sequestration

- All witnesses will remain in the courtroom but are deemed to be constructively sequestered. Therefore, it should be assumed that witnesses are unaware of prior trial testimony and no motion for separation of witnesses shall be necessary.
- In a criminal case in which the defendant is a witness, the defendant has the right to be present for the entirety of the trial and is not subject to witness separation.
 - All rules relating to student placement and seating within the courtroom still apply.