



2021 Ohio Mock Trial Virtual Competition Format

Updated 11/20/2020

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.

If you have questions or concerns regarding any of the following rules and guidelines, please contact Danielle Wilmot directly (dwilmot@ocle.org). We will update the rules similar to how we update the errata; bi-weekly based on advisor feedback.

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.

- **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
 - Teams must be available from 8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. on *both* days until they know their assignment.
 - OCLRE will post date and time block assignments by February 5, 2021.
 - Assignments will be made randomly.
 - Each day will consist of two time blocks; one AM block and one PM block.

Program Deadlines

- **Team Registration** – December 14, 2020
- **Team Roster** – January 8, 2021 (*All students, teachers, and advisors must be included. No additions are permitted after January 8.*)
- **Photo Release** – January 8, 2021
- **Behavior Standards** – January 8, 2021
- **Team Drop** – December 23, 2020 (*No refunds will be issued after this date.*)

I. Rules of Competition

- a. Team registration is taken on a first-come, first-served basis until we have reached capacity.
 - i. Teams may choose their date for the District competition from the four dates available. Dates will automatically fall off once they have been filled.
 - ii. OCLRE will assign teams to one of the two dates for the Regional competition.
- b. 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.
- c. **Each school is limited to registering three teams for the competition.**
 - i. We encourage schools to hold internal scrimmages and try-outs to choose the students who will represent the school in this year's competition.
- d. 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.
- e. We reserve 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).
- f. Teams may, as in the traditional competition, be asked to double in order to balance the number of teams during any trial time.
- g. 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.
 - i. Schools fielding three teams will be paired completely at random with no protection preventing them from playing another team from their school.
- h. ***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.
- i. Teams winning both trials at the District level will advance to the Regional competition.
 - i. Advancing teams **will be assigned** to compete on either February 19 or 20 at random.
 - ii. The protection against teams playing themselves for schools with two teams **does not apply at the Regional level.**

- j. Photo releases must be submitted electronically to OCLRE no later than January 8th.
 - i. If a photo release has not been submitted for a student, **they are ineligible to compete.**
 - ii. Parents/Guardians can select “no” but must still submit the form.

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 32 of the case file. The virtual competition will still follow this model.***
 - ii. We have built in additional lead-in time to the trial before judges enter the room. 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. 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. 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.
 - ii. 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. 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.

- ii. 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.
- iii. Students will be permitted to use screen-share to display the document to the court.
 - 1. The standard rules that the document be unaltered will still prevail, and the prohibition on demonstratives will still prevail.
- h. 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.
 - i. Judges will not announce or present attorney/witness awards during trial.

III. Zoom Information

- a. Trials will be held online, via Zoom
 - i. 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.)
- 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 should only 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. 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.
- 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.

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.
 - 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 the 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. e.g. Schools that permit in-person gatherings 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.
 - ii. 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) in order 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 made a decision regarding the State Finals, nor the MSMT Showcase
 - i. We will make the decision in the Winter based on best practices and recommendation of health officials/government restrictions