SCORING EVALUATOR
MATERIALS FOR
VIRTUAL COMPETITION
Scoring Evaluator Materials

On the following pages, you will find the guidelines for scoring the competition round. Below are some quick point reminders as you prepare.

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Quick Points for Scoring Evaluators

- You are giving scores on the students’ presentation of their case and witnesses, **not in the merits of the case**.
- **Feel free to change scores** in previous parts as the trial goes along. Using the “Back” button won’t erase anything ahead.
- **Vary your scores** throughout the Round. All speaking parts should not be 8s and 9s. Use the scores to differentiate between good, great and incredible.
- **Provide comments** to provide context to scores or highlight something you want the students to know.
- **All boxes** on the ballot need to be completed.
- **Team points** are a score of the overall performance of the team as a whole. This page of the scoresheet will help you with this scoring.
- **Do not evaluate** the students on their competition setup or location. Each team has had their own set of challenges to get to this point in the season and are doing what they can and have to in order to compete.
- **Do not ask** the teams to identify their school.
What is Different with this Virtual Season?

This season’s competitions will look and feel very similar to last season’s virtual competition. Here’s a summary of what’s changed and what hasn’t.

What’s Different between This Season and Last?

- Regional Competition rounds are on-line, using Zoom. We’re hoping later levels will be in-person (feel free to sign up!)
- Teams compete in geographic Regions.
- Attorneys will stand for all parts of their presentation.

What’s the Same between This Season and Last?

- Students may not be in the same location; some at home, some at school.
- Scoresheets will be filled out and submitted online.
- The Outstanding Attorney and Witness process will be done by each Judging Panel member individually ranking the attorneys and witnesses and not a collaborative decision by the entire panel. An average of the Panel’s rankings will be used to determine the final Awards.
- There will not be an opportunity for a critique after the trial. Due to the decentralized nature of the trial rounds, Evaluators will be completing their scoresheet on their own after the leave the Zoom meeting.
  - However, teams will receive any Evaluator comments provided on the scoresheet the next day, before their next Round.
- Exhibits will be shown on-screen during the admittance process, not just to the witness.

What Mock Trial Stuff Hasn't Changed?

- Each trial portion is timed: Opening/Closing = 5 minutes, Directs = 25 minutes, Crosses = 20 minutes.
- Each team fields three attorney and three witnesses.
- Witnesses will do their best impersonations of crazy characters.
- Witnesses cannot use any notes or script while on the stand.
- Coaching is not allowed during the trial.
- Only the six competing team members may talk to each other during the trial.
- Unfair extrapolations are still against the Rules.
- Time sucking is still against the Rules.

Once the trial gets underway, it will feel like the mock trial round you’re used to, just on TV.
Prepare for the Round(s)

- Please be familiar with the case materials before you come to the competition. (There will be a review and orientation session before each Round, during which time you may ask questions about specific points.)

Your preparation may proceed in this order:
- Review the Bench Brief for this Mock Trial case *(this will be emailed to each Judging Panel volunteer)*
- Read the case materials
- Familiarize yourself with the modified Georgia Rules of Evidence used for this competition and with the competition Rules related to trial Rounds
- Familiarize yourself with the Criteria for Scoring a Trial Presentation and the Explanation of Performance Ratings (Scoring Matrix)
- Familiarize yourself with the information contained in this checklist

Please have the following items handy during your trial round:
- Bench Brief
- The HSMT Rules
- These Trial Guidelines
- Daily Jury Duty Notice for your trial date; emailed from the Mock Trial office
- Trial Rosters for both teams, linked in the email from the Mock Trial office.
- A second screen or device for the official online scoresheet.

Zoom Information

Prior to the Round, the Mock Trial office will send out a Daily Jury Duty Notice that will provide all necessary information for the specific trial block. In that Notice, you will find:
- Zoom meeting information – as a link and the Meeting ID and Code
- Your specific courtroom assignment
- The team codes for the two teams in your courtroom
- Link to the Trial Roster Forms and to the scoresheet

Before you join the meeting, please rename your Zoom profile as follows:

Courtroom# - Eval (YourName)
1303 – Eval (Elizabeth Fite)

When you log on, you should be automatically sent to the virtual jury room with all other Judging Panel members. In order for this to occur, you must log in with the Zoom account (email address) you provided in your registration.

Prior to being sent to the courtroom, a brief Orientation will be held for last minute instructions and quick questions.
In the Courtroom

As an Evaluator, you will need to turn your camera and microphone on for specific parts of the trial:

- Judging Panel introductions (cam/mic)
- Opening Statements (cam only)
- Witness testimony (cam only; if the student attorneys request)
- Closing Arguments (cam only)

On the “Stop Video” icon, click the ^ arrow and select “Hide Non-Video Participants”. This will only have those with their cameras on show up on the screen.

- During Opening Statements and Closing Arguments, it will be the entire Judging Panel, delivering attorney, and both Timekeepers.
- During witness testimony, it will be the Presiding Judge, both attorneys and the witness on the stand. The Timekeepers will pop on for about 10 seconds each time they need to show their time cards.

You may use either the Gallery View or Speaker View.

- Gallery View, which is typically the default setting, gives you the Brady Bunch effect. You can move the boxes around if you like.
- Speaker View puts the speaker in the main box and others with their cameras on across the top.

When exhibits are being admitted and discussed, a team member will share their screen with the exhibit displayed. You will still be able to see those with their cameras on displayed on the right side. You can move the bar between them to resize if you like.

Feel free to use headphones/earbuds.

Feel free to have the online scoresheet open on a second screen or device and complete the scores and comments as the trial progresses. If you wish to take notes and do the scores afterwards, you can use a blank scoresheet found on the Judging Panel page.

Pre-Trial Matters

- The Presiding Judge will handle all pre-trial matters according to their guidelines (script).
- The Presiding Judge will remind Judging Panel members (and teams) the following:
  a. Turn their cameras on to introduce themselves (that will happen next) and keep their cameras on for Openings and Closings.
  b. Each attorney may request the evaluators to turn their cameras on.
  c. Except for introductions, evaluators’ microphones should remain off.
  d. Do not evaluate students based on their competition setting. Do not hold differences between the two teams’ settings against one team or the other.
  e. Remind teams that the Zoom chat may only be used by the Timekeepers to communicate with the trial and each other.
- The Judging Panel will introduce themselves to the teams. Feel free to give your name, where you’re from, and what kind of law you practice. Don’t get into how long you’ve done Mock Trial and do not talk about whether or not you read the case materials.
Evaluate Student Performance

1. The trial should proceed according to the Rules of the Georgia High School Mock Trial Competition.

2. **Students should be evaluated only on their presentation**, including their substantive presentation and knowledge of the facts and law, **not** the legal merits of the case. Mock trial cases are not cases that are worthy to take to trial in the real world. Don’t fault the teams for this.

3. Please use the scoring guidelines found in the preparation materials, online and at the end of the Bench Brief.

4. **DO NOT** confer with other panel members regarding individual scores or the scoresheet itself. **Complete your** scoresheet **independently of all other Panel members**.

5. A Scoring Evaluator may award points to a team despite an adverse ruling from the bench. (Scoring Evaluators are not bound by the decisions of the Presiding Judge to award points for sustained objections or deduct points for being overruled.) The intent is to evaluate the students on performance, not outcome.

6. We expect every student participant to observe proper courtroom decorum, to speak as clearly as possible and abide by the Code of Ethical Conduct at all times; however, students **should not be** evaluated based upon their dress, their jewelry, their hairstyle or any other aspect of their physical appearance or their real-life accent, dialect or the fact that English may not be their first language. We are proud that students from diverse racial, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds participate in the Georgia High School Mock Trial Competition.
   - Some attorneys are conditioned to saying “Thank you, your Honor” out of respect for the court after a ruling from the bench, even if the ruling is not in their favor. So as to not dissuade the attempted respect by the students, Evaluators should not deduct points for doing so.

7. Students should not be evaluated on their online courtroom setting. Each team’s situation of gathering together or having to compete at home is different and may change between two Rounds. Some teams may be able to compete in one location/room together while others have to compete from their own homes
   a. Teams have been instructed to set up their camera positions in a specific manner, depending on their situation. For students on their own device at home or in a socially distanced area should have themselves framed to minimize background distractions. Witness should be set so that their upper torso and hands can be seen.
   b. If a team is struggling with their technology connection, the Presiding Judge will work with them to resolve the issues.

8. As part of the evaluation of a student attorney, the Evaluator may look at how well that attorney raises and responds to objections. Obstructionist behavior and excessive technical objections should not be rewarded.

9. Witnesses who engage in excessively long, excessively non-responsive answers to a majority of the questions asked of them in order to deliberately run the clock down on an opposing team’s time (aka “time sucking”) should have their scores adjusted accordingly for this type of obstructionist behavior.

10. Evaluators may take into consideration when scoring an individual attorney, that attorney’s reliance (or non-reliance) on notes. It is up to the individual Evaluator how much weight to give this matter, and whether to deduct or reward points for the use (or non-use) of notes, within the overall scoring structure.
   a. Witnesses are not allowed to use notes during testifying.

11. Evaluators may take into consideration when scoring an individual attorney that attorney’s use and knowledge of specific Rules and Rule numbers. The student may demonstrate his/her knowledge by
citing Rules and/or Rule numbers of his/her own volition or upon request of the Presiding Judge. It is up to the individual evaluator how much weight to give this matter, and whether to reward or deduct points, within the overall scoring structure.

12. Team members who ask questions that require an unfair extrapolation or team members who offer an answer that includes an unfair extrapolation should have points deducted from their individual performance score. Teams have been advised that the best way to handle unfair extrapolations is through impeachment on cross examination and in the closing argument (if appropriate). Teams have been advised to only ask for a ruling on unfair extrapolations under Rule 4 from a judge as a last resort.

13. **Rule 20** strictly limits the use of costumes and illustrative devices. Evaluators should interpret Rule 20 strictly and narrowly, since the stipulations for this year’s case prohibits all costuming options this season.

**Emergencies during the Trial Round**

- **Rule 28(e)** exists to deal with Judging Panel emergencies during a Round. If something happens where a team member loses their connection, the Presiding Judge will stop the trial, instruct the timekeepers to stop time, and confer with the teams about giving the student a chance to log back on.

- If something happens where you lose your connection, make a note where the trial was when you dropped off, and log back on as quick as you can. If you missed a significant portion, we will use the other evaluators’ scores to fill in the gaps with your scoresheet.

- If the technology breakdown can be resolved, the court should allow time for the team or panel member to do so. If it looks to be a longer issue, consult with the HSMT Committee member in the main Zoom room about next steps.
  - If a team is struggling with their technology, the Presiding Judge is permitted to ask a coach to assist. This will not be considered a violation of Rule 24 by the coach communicating across the Bar.

**Concluding the Trial Round**

When the Presiding Judge dismisses the jury, leave the breakout room. You will wind up in the main meeting room of the Zoom call. There, an HSMT Committee Member will give you reminders about completing your scoresheet.

Unfortunately, due to the online nature and logistics of the meeting, the Evaluators will not be able to come back to the courtroom for a critique or debrief.

However, all written comments from the scoresheets will be forwarded to the teams before their next Round, so they will have a chance to get that feedback from the Evaluators.

**Point Deductions**

1. If you give a score of **4 or lower** in any performance category (or in the Team Points box), it is **IMPORTANT** that you explain the specific reason(s) for that score in the comment section—a constructive explanation of a low score will assist a team or individual member as they work to improve performance next season.

2. Please keep all comments constructive. Do not use expletives in any form. Additionally, personal, derisive comments are not helpful and have no place in this educational exercise.
Complete the Scoresheet

1. Once you have logged out of the Zoom meeting, you will then complete and submit the official scoresheet. You may refer to any notes you made during the trial. However, only scores submitted through the online ballot will be tallied.

2. Please be sure to complete your scoresheet independently of other panel members and
   - the correct team codes, date, and round are entered.
   - your name and Bar number are entered, along with your email address and a cell phone number. These would only be used if the Mock Trial office needs to contact you about your scoresheet.
   - each witness’s score is preceded by their witness name from the dropdown menu.
   - Check that there is NO TIE in the Team Points or Final Point Total boxes

3. At the end of your scoresheet, you will have the opportunity to rank the top three attorneys and top three witnesses from the trial. Your ranking will be averaged with the rankings from the other Judging Panel members to award the Outstanding Attorney and Witness Awards.

Final Notes for all Judging Panel Members

1. Conflicts with any team in the competition, or with a particular team in a particular Round, should be brought to the attention of the trial Coordinator immediately.

2. If you personally know a student or coach, please do not engage in personal conversations during the competition. The appearance of a Judging Panel member having a previous personal connection to a team member or team gives other teams a reason to doubt your impartiality in scoring. We trust your professionalism; however, appearances can be tough to overcome. It is very disheartening for a team to see a Panel member greet an opposing team member by name and ask him/her “How’s your grandma doing?”

3. If an error is found with your scoresheet, the Mock Trial office will be in contact to correct the error.

4. Do not base your decisions on the merits of the case – student knowledge and performance are the only items that should be evaluated.

5. Refrain from mentioning to students if you are not thoroughly prepared to serve on a Judging Panel or are unfamiliar with the materials or Rules. Students will be highly disappointed if they learn that this is the case, because they have spent so much time and effort preparing their presentations.

*** Thank you for your service! ***