



CENTER FOR CIVIC VALUES
PROVIDING EDUCATION AND RESOURCES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE LAW

High School Mock Trial FAQ

What is mock trial?

Mock Trial is a program for high school students that teaches the judicial branch of government and the legal system. Students learn to present arguments for both the prosecution and defense while acting as attorneys and witnesses

What are the benefits of Mock Trial?

New Mexico High School Mock Trial, a longstanding tradition, has operated for more than 25 years. New Mexico teams have excelled nationally, winning the championship in 2012 and 2013, and achieving second place in 2023. This program offers students valuable academic experience, enhancing their speaking, writing, reading, and analytical skills through immersion in the judicial system. Participants take on roles as attorneys and witnesses in simulated legal cases. The Center for Civic Values is dedicated to educating future leaders by deepening their understanding of the legal system.

1. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

One of the most significant benefits of middle school mock trial is its ability to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students must analyze case materials, consider different legal perspectives, and come up with sound arguments to support their positions. This requires them to think on their feet and approach problems from various angles, skills that will serve them well not only in the courtroom but in every aspect of their lives.

2. Teamwork and Collaboration:

Another key element of mock trial is teamwork. A trial isn't won by just one person; it takes a collaborative effort. Students work together in teams, learning to delegate responsibilities, support each other, and build strategies as a group. These are essential life skills that will help them in future academic settings, careers, and social environments.

3. Confidence and Public Speaking:

Mock trial also helps students develop confidence and public speaking skills. Whether acting as a lawyer making a compelling argument or a witness providing testimony, students must speak clearly, persuasively, and with conviction. Over time, they gain self-assurance in their ability to express themselves, and this confidence



extends beyond the courtroom into school presentations, interviews, and other public settings.

4. Legal Knowledge and Civic Engagement:

While mock trial is an exciting, hands-on experience, it also provides students with a deep understanding of the legal system and its role in society. They learn about legal procedures, courtroom etiquette, and the importance of justice. By engaging in these simulations, students become more informed citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities, preparing them for active participation in civic life.

5. Leadership and Responsibility:

Mock trial encourages leadership. Whether they're leading a team as the head attorney or organizing case strategies, students take on important roles that require them to step up, make decisions, and take responsibility. These experiences help them become more capable leaders and role models among their peers.

Who participates in Mock Trial?

Over 400 students compete each year (and it's growing!). Each team consists of seven to fourteen students. This consists of three attorneys and three witnesses per side and a timekeeper. The teams can also have up to three courtroom artists and three courtroom journalists. Students compete in four trial rounds over two days.

I want to start a mock trial team at my school. What do I do?

Great to hear! If you're a student, you should talk to a teacher or administrator at your school to get them on board. If you're a legal advisor, you should contact your local school to see how you can help them with the program. If you're a teacher, you'll need to gather a group of students interested in mock trial. Once you have your group, start working on trial basics, organizing your case theme, and preparing for the competition. The Center for Civic Values will be here to support you and assist as needed.

How many students are on a mock trial team?

Each team will have 3 attorneys and 3 witnesses, and 1 timekeeper for each side of the case. You'll need at least 7 students to be on the team with a maximum of 13 students. Depending on the size of your team, some or all students will have to play a role on both the prosecution and defense sides of the case.

How is Mock Trial organized?



The qualifier competition(s) takes place the third Friday and Saturday of February. The trials are held in courtrooms and each teams have the opportunity to argue both sides of the case. Teachers, coaches and family members are welcome to observe.

The state final competition will host the top sixteen teams from the qualifier competition(s). It will have the same set up as qualifiers. The winning team, courtroom artist and courtroom journalist will compete in the National competition.

Each team must have a teacher sponsor from their school. Teachers can recruit their own attorney coaches, or the Center for Civic Values will assist in recruiting attorneys to help coach teams. Local judges and attorneys volunteer to preside and score during the competitions.

What kind of cases will the students argue, draw and write about?

The case or problem differs each year, but it will be either a criminal or civil case. The case will be posted online at www.civicvalues.org on October 1 of each year.

How do I get the case?

The case will be released on the high school mock trial page of Center for Civic Values website on October 1. This is a free download.

How do I register to participate in the mock trial competition?

Registration forms are posted on the Center for Civic Values website in. Each team will also register. You may have a maximum of three teams from each school.

How much does it cost to participate in mock trial?

The entry fee is \$250 per team.

