

IOWA MIDDLE SCHOOL MOCK TRIAL SCORING RUBRIC

Thank you for volunteering to judge a round of middle school mock trial. The Bar Association and Young Lawyers Division, along with the coaches, competitors, and parents, all thank you for your time. To help you in scoring the competitors, please refer the following guidelines. These guidelines are not a “checklist,” but are designed to give you an idea of what a performance at each point level looks like.

	Opening Statement	Attorneys (Examinations)	Witnesses (Examinations)	Closing Argument
9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tells a cohesive and persuasive story, and leaves the listener feeling like s/he understands what happened - Provides the court with basic information about the charges/counts and the burden of proof - Student does not use notes - Presentation is engaging, polished, and natural - Student appears comfortable in the courtroom and uses movement and gestures for appropriate emphasis 	<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are appropriate for the type of examination (open ended on direct, leading on cross). - Are logically organized and presented - Student demonstrates ability to be flexible after unexpected answers or objections - Re-direct/re-cross is responsive and relevant. <p>Evidence & Objections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates exceptional knowledge of the Rules of Evidence by citing to Rules by name or number - Enters and uses exhibits in a clean and effective manner - Exhibits chosen are relevant and effective - Demonstratives are used appropriately and effectively. <p>Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confident and well spoken - Uses gestures and movement effectively - Direct: Allows the witness to be the “star” and questions sound natural - Cross: Controls the witness through cross control techniques and does not argue with the witness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Makes very good eye contact with Judges and is well spoken - Presentation is engaging and appropriate for the witness - Stays engaged even when not “on stand.” - Performance is natural and believable - Direct: Demonstrates a superior knowledge of the facts of the case, provides relevant answers the attorney’s questions and demonstrates rapport with the attorney. - Cross: Witness “picks battles” – answers questions with a yes/no unless it is necessary to qualify an answer or the attorney asks an open ended question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses facts in a persuasive manner to sum up the case - Demonstrates exceptional knowledge of the elements of the claim/charges and burden of proof - Effectively and persuasively applies the facts of this case to the controlling law - Presentation is engaging and effective - Student is in control of the courtroom and uses movement and gestures appropriately - Student relies on notes only for quoting things that happened during the trial
7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Story is mostly cohesive but leaves minor questions and most of the facts chosen are helpful to student’s case - Student uses notes sparingly - Very little apparent nerves - Uses gestures and movement in a manner that is mostly helpful and not distracting 	<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most questions are appropriate for the type of examination (open ended on direct, leading on cross) and follow a general, logical organization - Student demonstrates some ability to be flexible after unexpected answers or objections <p>Evidence & Objections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates strong knowledge of the Rules of Evidence - Enters and uses exhibits in a clean and effective manner - Exhibits chosen are mostly effective - Demonstratives are used appropriately and effectively most of the time. <p>Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confident and well spoken; some nerves; Uses most gestures and movements effectively - Direct: Allows the witness to be the “star” and most questions sound natural - Cross: Controls the witness most of the time through cross control techniques and does not argue with the witness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Makes good eye contact - Presentation is mostly engaging and appropriate for the witness - Very little nervousness - Direct: Does a nice job of communicating facts. Good rapport with attorney but sometimes feels rehearsed - Cross: Provides some answers that are too defensive/out of character, but generally answers yes/no unless asked an open ended questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses some facts persuasively - Demonstrates strong knowledge of the burden of proof and elements of the charge/claim - Attempts to apply facts of this case to the elements of the charge/claim - Presentation is effective but not always entertaining or directly on point - Student uses most of his or her gestures and movements to appropriately - Student uses an outline or very few notes, and only when absolutely necessary

	Opening Statement	Attorneys (Examinations)	Witnesses (Examinations)	Closing Argument
5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You can follow most of the story and some of the facts that are chosen are helpful to the student's case - Student relies on notes but is not reading from them - Student is visibly nervous - Gestures and movements are sometimes useful but sometimes distracting 	<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are sometimes appropriate for the type of examination (open ended on direct, leading on cross). - Questions are sometimes irrelevant or not well organized, but there is a general flow to the questioning - Student struggles to adapt after an unexpected event <p>Evidence & Objections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates some knowledge of the Rules of Evidence, especially when asked leading or helpful questions by the judge - Demonstrates awareness of the need to enter and use exhibits - Exhibits chosen are sometimes relevant and effective - Use of demonstratives is sometimes appropriate or effective. <p>Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visibly nervous - Gestures and movements are sometimes distracting - Direct: Questioning sounds rehearsed and/or attorney distracts from the witness - Cross: Struggles to control the witness and/or argues with the witness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sometimes makes eye contact - Makes some effort to portray the character or make the character interesting - Direct: Does a good job communicating most facts but sometimes struggles to give a cogent answer and frequently feels rehearsed - Cross: Answers some leading questions with a yes/no answer, but also provides additional information that is not relevant or is not responsive to the question - Seems distracted or nervous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates knowledge of the facts but does not use facts persuasively - Demonstrates knowledge of the burden of proof and charges/counts but does not apply the facts to the law - Parts of the presentation are effective, but parts are not relevant or not well presented - Student relies on notes or an outline - Student does not take control of the room, and gestures and movement are not always used appropriately
3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student struggles to tell a cohesive story - Heavy reliance on notes - Nerves interfere with performance - Gestures and movements are distracting - Does not seem comfortable in the courtroom 	<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Struggles to ask relevant question, relies on a script, or asks questions in the wrong format (example: uses only leading questions on direct). <p>Evidence & Objections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates little to no knowledge of the Rules of Evidence and does not enter evidence or seem to have any knowledge of how to deal with evidence or demonstratives <p>Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very nervous - Direct: Questions are read from notes and attorney distracts from the witness - Cross: Attorney fails to control the witness or argues with the witness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Struggles with making eye contact - Little effort to portray the character - Direct: Struggles to answer questions or seems to be reciting a memorized script. - Cross: Answers leading questions with long, non-responsive answers or argues with the attorney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates very little knowledge of the facts - References the burden of proof and charges/counts but does not demonstrate an understanding or in depth knowledge - Heavy reliance on notes - Gestures and movement are distracting

A score of 1 or 2 should be reserved for students who demonstrate disrespect for the process or whose performance shows little to no preparation or effort.

Team Score: The team score should reflect:

1. How well the students worked together
2. How well the students demonstrated professionalism and integrity
3. Overall performance as a group