

Mock Trial Coaching Tips

By Becky Likin – 14 year Veteran Mock Trial Teacher Coach for Tivy High School

Forming a team:

- In order to maintain a strong team throughout the years, students should be chosen from 9-12th grade. That way replacements are always available even when you graduate your strong seniors.
- Carry a team of at least 12 members (10 competing / 2 alternates - usually freshman) so that for the next year you always have hopefully at least 5 returning members who know the process.
- Use your team members to recruit other kids - your team is familiar with the rigor of the competition and know of others who would be able to handle the academic stress.
- Usually have tryouts in late September - case comes out in October.
- Choosing kids :
 1. With a strong theater background / public speaking / Debate
 2. Who are academically strong
 3. Are independent and motivated learners - they will have to be able to handle mock trial homework on top of their daily class load
 4. Are able to handle stress and meet time constraints
 5. Dependable

Budget:

- Since Mock Trial is not a UIL activity, your district may not have a budget for it. You will need to speak with your superintendent about the program and costs. (\$175 registration fee/ travel etc...)
- As the coach, you may want to ask for a stipend for your time - which is quite a bit...

Community Involvement:

- Try to secure a courtroom at your local courthouse for practices - this way the kids are familiar with placement and movements with in the courtroom.
- Try to have at least TWO local volunteer attorneys to help with the program who can attend most practices. This is very time consuming for the volunteers, so it may be best to recruit either young attorneys who have not started a family yet, or older attorneys who are looking to give back to the community.
- Make sure to get your local newspaper involved and aware of competitions and outcomes - this also **gives your volunteer attorneys some publicity for their time**
- Allow the local attorneys to run all evening practices. You can work individually with your students at school when time permits (lunch, conference, after school, or in class).

Practices:

- Since Mock trial is not part of the Public school curriculum, you may not have a class period devoted to it. (If you do have this opportunity within your school day, you are lucky!!) We practice two nights a week from 5-8. This means that the team members do an incredible amount of work on their own time.
- The students, from time to time, may also meet with their council table on their own to go over questions.
- Memorize all rule numbers and rules from early on.
- Depending on your location within Texas, other schools may want to scrimmage before competitions. This is great practice getting the kids up on their feet; however, it may also give away strategy to opposing schools.....

Competition:

- Do not clutter up council tables with too many papers. Always keep table organized and minimized.
- Memorize all speeches and lines of questions. - make everything look conversational.
- Always listen to the witnesses answer - even if you think you already know it.
- Know courtroom etiquette and use it.
- Never let a ruling discourage you - and never show discouragement or frustration on your face. Just move on.
- Never fabricate parts of fact statements - play by the rules.
- Always sit up straight and be attentive - even if it is not your witness.
- Never laugh at others or make side bar comments.
- Always congratulate other teams and be professional.

Professional Dress:

- It is very important to have your kids always look professional and conservative during competition. Encourage them, if possible, to purchase a conservative color pants suit (this prevents the girls from having too short of skirts). No loud colors or ties.
- No distracting jewelry.
- Make sure to wear shoes that are easy to walk in - hard enough to walk already when nervous.
- Hair should be tied back and kept out of face at all times. Boys should not have a distracting haircut and be somewhat clean cut.