

NATIONAL TRIAL COMPETITION

Bailiffs' Guidelines & Instructions

Thank you for volunteering to be a bailiff during the National Trial Competition. The NTC committee thanks you for your time, as your participation helps to make this competition a success! Below are some general guidelines and some instructions that you should follow when serving as a bailiff in the competition.

What is NTC?

The National Trial Competition (NTC) is arguably the most prestigious law school mock trial competition in the nation, which was created to stimulate law student interest in developing trial advocacy skills. The competition is co-sponsored by the Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA) and the American College of Trial Lawyers (ACTL). This year, over 300 mock trial teams will compete at regional competitions during February and the top two teams from each of the 15 regions will advance to the national competition in Texas.

What are my primary responsibilities?

The bailiff is the person who signals the beginning of the mock trial, the person who keeps the trial on track by enforcing time limits, and the person who makes sure the scoring ballots have been correctly tallied and then verified by a competition administrator. Thus, the bailiff plays an important role in the competition. Please do not ask any team member where he/she is from, as they are not allowed to tell you.

What should I do before the mock trial begins?

Before the trial begins, a competition administrator will assign you to a competition courtroom. You will most likely escort the judges to the courtroom. At this time, or at some point before the round begins, you should get the name of the presiding judge. The presiding judge's name should be on the scoring envelope, which contains a scoring ballot for each judge. If his/her name is not on the envelope, then simply ask for his/her name. The envelope will also tell you the team numbers for each team competing in your assigned courtroom.

In addition, ask the student advocates what time signals they require. You should give them notice of the time left at regular intervals, and upon request by the student advocates.

Before officially beginning the round, please allow the judges to view the people in the room for their round so they may tell you whether they recognize anyone, which may constitute a conflict of interest. If a judge does recognize someone, please let the competition administrators know as soon as possible.

To begin the trial, you should stand and state:

All please rise!

The _____ District Court of _____ County, U.S.A., is now in session,

The Honorable Judge _____ presiding.

The Court (the judging panel) will then direct the student advocates to be seated, and the mock trial will begin.

What do I need to know about timekeeping?

The bailiff must keep time in accordance with the competition rules. A full version of the competition rules can be found on the TYLA website, www.tyla.org/ntc.

Written Track of Time: Make sure that you keep written track of the time used by each side for each opening statement, each direct examination, each cross examination, etc. The only proper way to keep track of the time being used is to keep a written, running tally. You are encouraged to use the attached timekeeping sheet.

Timekeeping Device: The competition host will ask that the volunteer bailiffs keep time on their cellphones (on airplane mode), so that they can keep track of the remaining time for both competing teams in the round.

Pre-trial Motions: After the student advocates take care of some “housekeeping” matters, they make some pre-trial motions. Presentation and argument of pretrial motions shall be limited to a total time of 16 minutes divided equally between the parties as follows: (1) the plaintiff shall have four minutes to present any motions, (2) the defense shall have four minutes to respond, (3) the defense shall have four minutes to present any motions, and (4) the plaintiff shall have four minutes to respond.

Time for Case Presentation: Each team will have 60 minutes to present and argue its case. Thus, you will start counting down from 60 minutes when each team does an opening statement.

Objections: During the trial, a student advocate will occasionally make an objection to testimony or an exhibit. When this happens, you must stop the clock. You will then resume the clock after the student advocates address the objection and the presiding judge rules on the objection.

The bailiff should inform each team when they have used their allotted time by standing.

What do I do after the mock trial is over?

At the end of the trial, the presiding judge will ask that the courtroom be cleared so that the judges may fill out the scoring ballots. Please mark this time on your timekeeping form as the beginning of the protest period. The judges will complete their ballots and the presiding judge will fill out the Master Ballot. You will collect all scoring ballots and the Master Ballot. ***You must review the ballots to make sure they have been correctly marked.*** Specifically, you must check to make sure that each judge completed his/her ballot using the correct scoring range (the opening and closing statements are scored from 1-20; the direct and cross examinations are scored from 1-15). You must also check to make sure that a judge did not end up with a tie; ties are not permitted. If a judge scored using the wrong range or has a tie, simply ask the judge to correct the ballot.

When the ballots are correct, please put them (with the Master Ballot on top) in the scoring envelope and take the envelope to the competition scoring room. You will wait until a competition administration verifies the scoring ballots. After the ballots are verified, a competition administrator will allow you to turn to the courtroom to release the judges and the student advocates.

The judges will use the time you are away to give the student advocates comments about their performances.

What is a protest and when must it be lodged?

After a trial is completed, a team may lodge a protest that material evidence outside the record was introduced. Such protests must be lodged with the presiding judge within five (5) minutes of the completion of the trial. The trial is completed when the judges release the teams after closing arguments. Your job is to determine if any such protests are timely. It is VERY IMPORTANT that you note the time as soon as the trial ends and advise the presiding judge when the five (5) minutes have elapsed.

If a timely protest is lodged, the presiding judge may ask you to determine which witness's testimony is in issue. If possible, you should locate the witness and ask him/her to remain at or near the courtroom. You may also need to locate a competition administrator.

THANK YOU FOR BEING A BAILIFF!