



REGIONAL HOST HANDBOOK

51st Annual Competition



Prepared by the Texas Young Lawyers Association

Introduction

Thank you for hosting the National Trial Competition (NTC) regional competition this year. The NTC Committee of the Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA) and the American College of Trial Lawyers (ACTL) appreciates your dedication and are here to help you succeed in planning the regional competition.

We provide this Regional Host Handbook as a guide to planning a successful regional competition, from securing judges to understanding the standardized scoring method. It is intended to serve as a resource material and not as a rigid set of rules. Thus, you may follow your region's customs and practices so long as they remain consistent with the NTC Rules, which have also been provided to you.

TYLA is pleased to work with you in this endeavor, and we sincerely hope this handbook assists you in the task of administering your regional competition. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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Chapter 1: General Information

1.1 Competition Rules

The competition rules are posted online at <http://www.tyla.org/ntc>. Regional hosts are expected to read and be familiar with the competition rules prior to the regional competitions.

To the extent there are any inconsistencies or conflicts between the handbook and competition rules—the competition rules control.

The NTC Committee is the final authority concerning the competition rules, the regional competitions, and the national competition.

1.2 Definitions

“Break rounds” means the quarterfinal, semifinal, and final rounds.

“Break score” means the round wins, ballot wins, point differential, and total points for the lowest ranking team to qualify for the quarterfinal round.

“Foil team” means a team that participates in preliminary rounds, but cannot qualify for the quarterfinal, semifinal, or final rounds. Foil teams must be made up of current law students familiar with the mock trial problem. In the event the regional host is unable to field a foil team from their respective law schools, they may contact participating schools to recruit a foil team.

“Participating schools” means the regional law schools that have timely submitted their registration forms and paid their registration fees.

“Regional hosts” means the law school in each region hosting their regional trial competition. There are 15 NTC Regions. The regional hosts’ contact information is posted online at <http://www.tyla.org/ntc>.

“The NTC Coordinator” means Bree Trevino. She can be reached via email at btrevino@texasbar.com. The NTC Coordinator will occasionally email regional hosts and participating schools updates, modifications, and clarifications.

“Woodshedding” means the 15-minute period prior to the beginning of a round where the teams meet with their witnesses to discuss their testimony.

1.3 Registration and Fees

Information about registration, entry fees, clarification questions, and deadlines is posted online at <http://www.tyla.org/ntc>.

The NTC Coordinator will email an invitation with registration instructions and deadlines to all ABA-accredited law schools in September.

Registration forms, entry fees, and clarification questions should be submitted to the NTC Coordinator.

The NTC Committee may, at its discretion, permit law schools who missed the registration deadline to participate.

The NTC Coordinator will email a list of participating schools to the regional hosts after the registration deadline. Regional hosts should be aware that this list is subject to change.

1.4 Regional Law School Recruitment

The NTC Coordinator will share with the regional hosts the identity of law schools in their region that have either not registered for the competition or that have not participated in recent competitions.

Regional hosts are encouraged to contact these law schools directly to explain the benefits of participating in the competition. Contact should be made as early as possible so the law schools can meet the registration deadline.

1.5 Communication with Participating Schools

Regional hosts should carbon copy the NTC Coordinator on all communications with participating schools.

1.6 Initial Email to Participating Schools

Regional hosts should email participating schools to thank them for registering for the competition no later than **December 1, 2025**. The email should include the regional competition date and expected publication date of the regional problem as well as details regarding whether the competition will proceed virtually or in person and whether schools will be required to provide one or more witnesses.

1.7 Informational Email

Regional hosts should email participating schools to provide basic information about the regional competition no later than **December 15, 2025**. The email should include the following information: (1) the format of the regional competition, e.g., number of teams participating, preliminary rounds and break rounds and a reminder about providing witnesses; (2) whether the use of learned treatises is permitted during rounds; (3) information regarding any receptions or other social events; (4) hotel accommodations, including information about any blocks of hotel rooms, discount rates, parking fees, etc.; (5) the time and location of the coaches' meeting a; and (6) the deadline to submit clarification questions about the competition rules and regional problem, along with a reminder to submit clarification questions to the NTC Coordinator.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

Your Informational Email should include the following information: (1) the format of the regional competition, e.g., number of teams participating, virtual platform that will be used, preliminary rounds and break rounds and a reminder about providing witnesses; (2) whether the use of learned treatises is permitted during rounds; (3) the time of the coaches' meeting and the virtual platform that will be used; and (4) the deadline to submit clarification questions about the competition rules and regional problem, along with a reminder to submit clarification questions to the NTC Coordinator.

1.8 Social Events during the Regional Competition

The regional host may have a reception, awards ceremony, or any other special, social events during the regional competition. The regional host is not required to have any such events; they are purely optional.

The NTC Committee does not provide awards for the regional competitions; however, the regional winner and runner-up will be recognized at the national competition.

1.9 Sponsors for the Regional Competition

To offset hosting expenses the regional hosts may solicit sponsorships from third parties, such as law firms and vendors. Regional hosts should acknowledge sponsors in the written and electronic materials.

1.10 Competition Program

Regional hosts may create a competition program. The NTC Committee recommends that regional hosts list all participating schools, team members and coaches, the volunteer judges, and any sponsors. The list of judges may change at the last minute with dropouts and add-ins, so regional hosts may want to list all backup people in the roster even though they might not actually judge.

1.11 Accommodations for Participating Schools

As soon as practicable, the regional host should contact local hotels regarding room availability and prices. This information should be sent to the out-of-town participating schools to help them find accommodations during the competition. Many hotels will offer a block room discount rate and parking discounts.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

Section 1.11 does not apply to Virtual Competitions.

1.12 Reimbursement

TYLA may reimburse expenses up to, but not to exceed, one-half of the amount received in registration fees for the respective region. Requests for reimbursement, including itemized receipts, must be submitted via email to the NTC Coordinator **no later than April 15, 2026**. TYLA does not reimburse regional hosts for alcohol or expenses that have been covered by a third party, donation, or sponsor.

Reimbursements will not be processed until after the deadline. If you did not receive an email response from the NTC Coordinator, Bree Trevino, please confirm receipt. The window for reimbursement requests will close at 5:00 p.m. central time on the due date, even if the deadline is a weekend or holiday. **Any application not submitted by the deadline will not be reimbursed.**

1.13 Send Thank You Notes

Regional hosts should send a thank you note or email to all judges, witnesses, bailiffs, and others who assisted with the regional competition.

1.14 Transmitting Competition Results to the NTC Coordinator

Regional hosts must transmit the results from their regional competition to the NTC Coordinator within **three business days** after the competition ends.

Chapter 2: Format of the Competition

2.1 Regional Competitions Format

The NTC Committee recommends that the regional hosts use the national format for the regional competition (see the competition rules posted online at www.tyla.org/ntc). The national format consists of four preliminary rounds, a quarterfinal round, a semifinal round, and a final round.

2.2 Final Rounds

Regional hosts may elect to forego a final round and simply send the winners of the semifinal rounds to the national competition.

2.3 Regional Competition Winner and Runner-up Selection

The NTC Committee requires regional hosts to designate a “winner” and a “runner-up” from each regional competition for the national competition.

If a final round is held, the winning team is declared the “winner” and the losing team the “runner-up.”

If no final round is held, the “winner” is determined by: (1) total ballots in the semifinal round; (2) total ballots in the quarterfinal and semifinal rounds; or (3) total ballots in the preliminary, quarterfinal, and semifinal rounds.

The winner and runner-up from each region will advance to the national competition in Texas.

2.4 Neutral Location

The NTC Committee recommends that regional hosts locate the competition at courthouse to lessen the perception that the regional hosts’ participating teams have an unfair advantage.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

Section 2.4 does not apply to Virtual Competitions.

2.5 Competition Facility

Regional hosts should contact courtroom personnel as soon as possible to secure an ample number of courtrooms for the regional competition. If the regional host cannot secure the necessary number of courtrooms, he or she needs to consider viable options, e.g., spacious classrooms or courtrooms at the law school. Similar rooms should be provided to all teams. If

similar accommodations are not available, every effort should be made to see that one team (or one participating school) does not consistently find itself performing in a nonconforming facility.

Regional hosts should further secure facilities that offer ample room to coordinate all the associated parties. For example, it is preferable to have separate rooms for the judges and the witnesses for their respective judges' meeting and witness's meeting.

Regional hosts should also consider the availability, safety, and cost of parking.

The NTC Committee recommends that regional hosts reserve at least one extra courtroom for each round, just in case a judge (real life) unexpectedly needs to use their courtroom during the competition.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

Section 2.5, as written, does not apply to Virtual Competitions. Instead, virtual regional competitions should be conducted through a commonly used videoconferencing platform—such as Zoom. Trials should occur in separate meetings, breakout, or webinar rooms.

2.6 Regional Competition Dates

The regional competitions must be held during the date ranges of **January 30-February 1**, **February 6-8**, and **February 20-22, 2026**. Regional hosts have the discretion to decide on the specific dates of their regional competitions.

Regional hosts should take into account holidays (e.g. Valentine's Day, Super Bowl, Presidents Day), bar conventions or meetings, and other advocacy competitions, and any other events that may be scheduled during the same time frame. Conflicts with other events and holidays will reduce supply of potential judges and witnesses.

2.7 Scheduling Conflicts

Participating schools unable to participate in their regional competition on the date selected by the regional host may submit a special request to be placed in another region to the NTC Coordinator.

Requests must be submitted as soon as practicable after the participating school becomes aware of the conflict. The request should explain the circumstances giving rise to the conflict and provide availability during the other regional competition dates. The NTC Committee may, at its discretion, grant such requests.

2.8 Regional Problem

The regional problem will be posted online at www.tyla.org/ntc. Participating school will be notified via email when the problem is posted.

2.9 Learned Treatise Election

Regional hosts may elect to permit participating schools to use learned treatises during rounds.

The NTC Committee encourages regional hosts to consider the tradition in their region when determining whether to permit the use of learned treatises.

2.10 Neutrality

Regional hosts must strive to maintain neutrality throughout the competition to avoid the perception that teams representing their school have an unfair advantage.

The regional hosts' participating competition teams, their coaches, and their advisors, should not be involved in the administration of the competition.

2.11 Odd Number of Participating Schools in Regional Competitions

The NTC Committee recommends that regional hosts use a foil team when they have an odd number of participating teams in the regional competition.

Regional hosts can alternatively elect to give one team a bye during each preliminary round.

2.12 Coaches Meeting

Regional **hosts must conduct a coaches' meeting** prior to the start of the regional competition.

Participating schools are required to send at least one coach or representative to the coaches' meeting.

Regional hosts should go over the competition rules, give coaches an opportunity to seek and obtain clarification on competition-related matters, inform coaches of the bye process (if applicable), notify the coaches of the preliminary round team pairings, when and where ballots will be made available, **and discuss and seek volunteers to host next year's regional competition**. Hosts are required to report the plan for next year's regional host to the NTC Coordinator immediately after the competition.

Chapter 3: Judges

3.1 Recruitment of Judges

Having varied perspectives results in a better and more well-rounded experience for participants, judges, and the competition.

The NTC Committee strongly encourage regional hosts to actively recruit judges from a variety of demographics, experience levels, and fields of practice. The judges participating in the regional competition should reflect the diversity of our profession.

3.2 Responsibility for Providing Judges

Regional hosts are responsible for providing judges for the competition.

3.3 Early Recruitment

Regional hosts should start recruiting judges as early as possible.

The NTC Committee recommends regional hosts begin recruiting judges three months before the regional competition.

3.4 Resources for Recruitment

Regional hosts should use all available resources when recruiting judges.

It is preferable to recruit judges with a minimum of four years trial experience.

The NTC Committee recommends that regional hosts contact their local and state bar associations to assist with recruitment for the competition. Regional hosts are also encouraged to contact local specialty bar associations (e.g. trial lawyers' association, criminal defense bar association, etc.). These bar associations can place "recruitment advertisements" in their newsletters or send it to their members as an email blast.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

Regional hosts conducting virtual competitions should also reach out to local bar associations in other cities.

Regional hosts may ask their ACTL liaison for assistance in recruiting judges. If a Regional Host does not have the contact information for their ACTL liaison, the host may request their ACTL information from the NTC Coordinator.

The NTC Committee recommends asking those who've agreed to participate as judges to reach out to their peers and co-workers to invite them to judge.

Regional hosts should check their local law directory for current contact information when recruiting judges, as attorneys often retire, change firms, or offices.

Regional hosts should stress that hosting the regional competition is an honor and local support is vitally important to a successful competition.

When recruiting judges, regional hosts should check if their state's continuing education requirements allow judging an advocacy competition to count as Continuing Legal Education self-study hours.

3.5 Number of Judges

A minimum of three judges are need for each trial. So, if a competition has 24 teams in the preliminary rounds, with 12 trials in each preliminary round, then the competition will need a minimum of 36 judges for each preliminary round.

The NTC Committee recommends that regional hosts recruit four judges for each trial because some judges will cancel last minute, while others will be no-shows.

3.6 Panel Roles

The panel judging each trial consists of, at a minimum, a presiding judge and additional judges.

Judges (real-life) or the most experienced attorney on the panel should act as presiding judge. The presiding judge conducts the trial and rules on objections.

3.7 Judge Registration

Regional hosts should collect the following information from judges prior to the competition: (1) name; (2) work address; (3) work email address; (4) personal email address; (5) cell phone number; (6) primary practice areas; (7) demographics; (8) law school attended; (9) law school graduation year; and (10) any affiliations with the participating schools.

3.8 Confirmation Email

Regional hosts should email judges to confirm their registration details. The email should include the following information: (1) detailed information about the date, time (check-in time 30 minutes before the round begins), and parking; (2) a copy of the "Guidelines for NTC Judges;" (3) a link to the "NTC Judges' Instructional Video;" (4) the regional problem; (5) the regional bench brief.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

A Virtual Region's Confirmation Email should include the following information: (1) detailed information about the date, time (check-in time 30 minutes before the round begins), and login instructions; (2) a copy of the "Guidelines for NTC Judges;" (3) a link to the "NTC Judges' Instructional Video;" (4) the regional problem; (5) the regional bench brief.

Hosts should also consider drafting instructions pertaining to the virtual requirements for judges (e.g. naming conventions, use of computers instead of mobile devices, what to do if disconnected, etc.) to send in the Confirmation Email. The NTC does not provide these instructions as each region may vary in its virtual platform.

If any of the confirmation information is unavailable at the time of confirmation email, the regional hosts should send a follow up email to the judge with the information as soon as it becomes available.

3.9 Calendar Invite

Regional hosts should send judges a calendar invite to both their work and personal email addresses with their assigned time, parking instructions, a link to the "NTC Judges' Instructional Video," and copies of the guidelines, problem, and bench brief.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

A Virtual Region's calendar invite should include the following information: the judge's assigned time, login instructions, a link to the "NTC Judges' Instructional Video," and copies of the guidelines, problem, bench brief, and any virtual instructions the regional host has prepared.

The calendar invite should include contact information for the regional host and instructions to contact them immediately if the judge is unable to participate.

3.10 Final Reminder

Shortly before the competition the regional hosts should send all judges a reminder email thanking them for agreeing to judge during the competition and giving them an opportunity to ask any questions or notify the appropriate person if they are no longer able to participate.

3.11 Panel Assignments

Regional hosts should choose a tentative panel (one presiding and additional judges) **two weeks** before the regional competition. Panels should be structured in a manner that advances NTC's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Panel assignments are always subject to change as judges cancel and are added.

Regional hosts should avoid having alumni judge their own law school teams or any other law school with whom they have an affiliation.

3.12 Judges' Meeting

Regional hosts may hold a judges' meeting before the competition and/or each round to go over the scoring system, competition rules and guidelines, and to answer any questions.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

The judges' meeting should also include virtual instructions for the competition.

It is important for regional hosts to emphasize that neither the merits nor the demonstrative evidence should sway the judges' decisions, the ability of a witness to reply to answers should not be considered, the necessary inference rule applies, and the judges should not leave after the round until the bailiff indicates that the ballots have been received in the virtual tabulation system.

Chapter 4: Witnesses

4.1 Responsibility for Providing Witnesses

Regional hosts must elect to either: (1) provide witnesses for the competition, (2) require the participating schools to provide all witnesses, or (3) require the participating schools to provide either expert OR fact witnesses, with the regional host providing the other witness for each round.

While the same witness is not required to participate in every preliminary round, the regional host and/or schools must provide sufficient witnesses for all preliminary and playoff rounds.

4.1a When Participating Schools Provide Witnesses

If the regional hosts elect to have participating schools provide witnesses, each participating school should provide one or two witnesses (as determined by the regional host) for each team they have participating, and for each round in which they are competing. Participating schools should provide regional hosts with the names and contact information for their witnesses at least **three weeks** before the competition.

In addition to any expert or law witnesses regional hosts may be providing, regional hosts should secure two to four back up witnesses to replace school provided witnesses in case one or more school-provided witnesses is unavailable at the competition.

4.1b Recruitment When Regional Hosts Provides Witnesses

Regional hosts should start recruiting witnesses as early as possible.

The NTC Committee recommends regional hosts begin recruiting witnesses three months before the regional competition. Regional hosts should use all available resources when recruiting judges.

The NTC Committee recommends that regional hosts recruit extra witnesses for each round because some witnesses will cancel last minute, while others will be no-shows.

Witnesses may be recruited from a variety of sources, including law school, undergraduate and graduate schools, paralegal programs, sororities and fraternities, theater programs, police stations (where a police officer is part of the problem), attorneys, law firm staff, retirement and senior living facilities, friends, family, etc.

Regional hosts should avoid recruiting high school students as witnesses.

4.2 Number of Witnesses

Four witnesses are required for each trial—two for each side. So, if there 24 teams participating in the regional competition, then the regional host will need a minimum of 48 witnesses.

4.3 Witness Roles

Regional hosts should notify region-provided witnesses of which roles they are expected to know before the competition.

Regional hosts should assign witnesses to teams for each round, except no witness may: (1) witness in a trial involving the participating school that provided them or (2) perform the same role for the same team in multiple rounds.

School-provided witnesses must either be prepared to play a role on each side of the case or schools must provide sufficient witnesses to have a witness available for either side of the case.

4.4 Witness Registration

Regional hosts should collect the following information from witnesses prior to the competition: (1) name; (2) work email address; (3) personal email address; (4) cell phone number; (5) law school attended; and (6) any affiliations with the participating schools.

4.5 Confirmation Email

Regional hosts should email witnesses to confirm their registration details. The email should include the following information: (1) detailed information about the date, time (check-in time 30 minutes before the round begins), and parking instructions; (2) a copy of the “Guidelines for NTC Witnesses”; (3) a link to the “NTC Witness’s Instructional Video;” and (4) the witness statements or depositions pertaining to the witnesses’ roles.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

Virtual Region Confirmation Emails should include login instructions instead of parking instructions.

Regional Hosts should also consider drafting instructions pertaining to the virtual requirements for witnesses (e.g. naming conventions, use of computers instead of mobile devices, what to do if disconnected, etc.) to send in the Confirmation Email. The NTC does not provide these instructions as each region may vary in its virtual platform.

If any of the confirmation information is unavailable at the time of confirmation, the regional host should send a follow up email to the witnesses with the information as soon as it becomes available.

4.6 Calendar Invite

Regional hosts should send witnesses a calendar invite to both their work and personal email addresses with their assigned time, parking instructions, a link to the “NTC Witnesses Instructional Video,” and copies of the guidelines and the applicable witness statements or depositions pertaining to the witnesses’ roles.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

Virtual Region calendar invites should include the following information: the witnesses’ assigned time, login instructions, a link to the “NTC Witnesses Instructional Video,” copies of the guidelines and the applicable witness statements or depositions pertaining to the witnesses’ roles, and any virtual instructions the regional host has prepared.

The calendar invite should include contact information for the regional host and instructions to contact them immediately if the witness is unable to participate.

4.7 Final Reminder

Shortly before the competition the regional hosts should send all witnesses a reminder email thanking them for agreeing to participate during the competition and giving them an opportunity to ask any questions or notify the appropriate person if they are no longer able to participate.

4.8 Witness’ Instructional Video

NTC’s “Witness’ Instructional Video” is available online at www.tyla.org/ntc. Regional hosts should share a link to the video with all competition witnesses and, if necessary, play the video for the witnesses before each round.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

The NTC-provided “Witness’ Instructional Video” does not address the virtual responsibilities of witnesses. Regional hosts must prepare or present these instructions to witnesses as they see fit.

4.9 Witness Assignments

Regional hosts should choose tentative witness assignments **two weeks** before the regional competition.

Witness assignments are always subject to change as witnesses cancel and are added.

4.10 Witness's Meeting

Regional hosts should hold a witness's meeting before the competition and/or each round to go over competition rules and guidelines, and to answer any questions.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

The witness meeting should also include virtual instructions for the competition.

It is important for regional hosts to go over the necessary inference rule and impeachment by omission with the witnesses—as these concepts can be confusing to laypersons.

Chapter 5: Bailiffs

5.1 Responsibility for Providing Bailiffs

Regional hosts are responsible for providing bailiffs for the competition. The witness assigned as the Defendant in a round may act as the bailiff.

5.2 Early Recruitment

Regional hosts should start recruiting bailiffs as early as possible.

The NTC Committee recommends regional hosts begin recruiting bailiffs three months before the regional competition.

5.3 Recruiting Judges

Regional hosts should use all available resources when recruiting bailiffs.

Any adult may serve as a bailiff. Law students are a great resource for bailiffs.

Some law school advocacy organizations may give students advocacy points for participating as a bailiff, which may provide an incentive for volunteering to be a bailiff.

5.4 Number of Bailiffs

At least one bailiff is needed for each trial. So, if a competition has 24 teams in the preliminary rounds, with 12 trials in each preliminary round, then the competition will need a minimum of 12 bailiffs for each preliminary round.

The NTC Committee recommends that regional hosts recruit additional bailiffs for each round because some bailiffs will cancel last minute, while others will be no-shows.

5.5 Bailiff Role

During trial, bailiffs will: (1) keep time for both teams; (2) ensure that only all necessary persons are present in the courtroom before the round begins; (3) communicate with participants who request a time check; (4) mark the end of the final closing argument to mark the end of the round and the beginning of the protest period; (5) communicate with the regional host to determine when the ballots have been received and when the judges may begin post-trial feedback; (6) confirm with the regional host that judges may be released from the round upon completion of any feedback; and (7) communicate the winner to the presiding judge, if applicable.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

Bailiffs in virtual rounds should also: (8) ensure that there are no school indications on any screen before judges enter the room, and (9) answer technology questions.

5.6 Bailiff Registration

Regional hosts should collect the following information from bailiffs prior to the competition: (1) name; (2) work email address; (3) personal email address; and (4) cell phone number.

5.7 Confirmation Email

Regional hosts should email bailiffs to confirm their registration details. The email should include the following information: (1) detailed information about the date, time (check-in time 30 minutes before the round begins), and parking instructions; (2) a copy of the “Guidelines for NTC Bailiffs;” and (3) a link to the “NTC Bailiffs’ Instructional Video.”

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

Virtual Region confirmation emails should include login instructions instead of parking instructions.

Regional Hosts should also consider drafting instructions for the Bailiffs’ virtual responsibilities (e.g. opening virtual room, confirming parties in the room, confirming naming structures of parties in the room, etc.) to send in the Confirmation Email. The NTC does not provide these instructions as each region may vary in its virtual platform.

If any of the confirmation information is unavailable at the time of confirmation, the regional host should send a follow up email to the bailiffs with the information as soon as it becomes available.

5.8 Calendar Invite

Regional hosts should send bailiffs a calendar invite to both their work and personal email addresses with their assigned time, parking instructions, a link to the “NTC Bailiffs’ Instructional Video,” and copies of the “Guidelines for NTC Bailiffs.”

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

Virtual Region calendar invites should include the following information: the bailiff's assigned time, login instructions, a link to the "NTC Bailiffs' Instructional Video," copies of the "Guidelines for NTC Bailiffs," and any instructions for virtual responsibilities the regional host has prepared..

Regional Hosts should also consider drafting instructions for the Bailiffs' virtual responsibilities (e.g. opening virtual room, confirming parties in the room, confirming naming structures of parties in the room, etc.) to send in the Confirmation Email. The NTC does not provide these instructions as each region may vary in its virtual platform.

The calendar invite should include contact information for the regional host and instructions to contact them immediately if the bailiff is unable to participate.

5.9 Final Reminder

Shortly before the competition the regional hosts should send all bailiffs a reminder email thanking them for agreeing to serve as bailiffs during the competition and giving them an opportunity to ask any questions or notify the appropriate person if they are no longer able to participate.

5.10 Bailiffs' Instructional Video

NTC's "Bailiffs' Instructional Video" is available online at www.tyla.org/ntc. Regional hosts should share a link to the video with all competition bailiffs and either confirm that they have watched it or play the video for bailiffs before they begin participating in the competition.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

The NTC-provided "Bailiffs' Instructional Video" does not address the virtual responsibilities of bailiffs. Regional hosts must prepare or present these instructions to bailiffs as they see fit.

5.11 Bailiffs' Meeting

Regional hosts should hold a bailiffs' meeting before the competition and/or each round to go over the scoring system, competition rules and guidelines, and to answer any questions.

NOTE FOR VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS

The bailiff meeting should also include virtual instructions.

It is important for regional hosts to go over the importance of accurate time keeping, stopping the time when participants make objections (and then starting the timer after the presiding judge rules on the objection), the ballot procedures after the trial, and keeping track of the post-trial time to lodge protests.

Chapter 6: Team Pairings

6.1 Participating Schools' Teams Pairing

Teams from the same participating school should not face each other in the competition prior to the final round. Team pairings should be modified, to the extent necessary, to avoid this outcome.

6.2 Team Pairings for the First and Second Preliminary Rounds

Regional hosts should randomly select the team pairings for the first two preliminary rounds.

Regional hosts should determine team pairings for the first two preliminary rounds of the competition before the Coaches' Meeting.

6.3 Team Pairings for the Third Preliminary Round

Regional hosts are required to have at least three preliminary rounds.

Regionals hosts seeking an exception to this rule must obtain approval from the NTC Committee. Requests for an exception should be submitted to the NTC Coordinator no later than **January 12, 2026**.

Regional hosts should use a power-matching process (e.g. the team ranked first against the team ranked second and so on) to determine team pairings for the third preliminary round; however, adjustments should be made, if necessary, to avoid having a trial in the third preliminary round with teams from the same participating schools or with teams who've already faced each other on the same side in a prior round.

6.4 Publication of Team Pairings

Regional hosts should disseminate team pairings and room assignments in a convenient, accessible manner.

The NTC Committee recommends regional hosts use a format similar to the following:

Preliminary Round One

Courtroom	Plaintiff	Defense
99th Dist. Court (3rd floor) [or Virtual Room No. 1]	Team 101	Team 501
351st Dist. Court (2nd floor) [or Virtual Room No. 2]	Team 201	Team 601
107th Dist. Court (2nd floor) [or Virtual Room No. 3]	Team 301	Team 701
County Court at Law # 1 (3rd floor) [or Virtual Room No. 4]	Team 401	Team 801

6.5 Bye Rounds (Odd Number of Teams with No Foil Team)

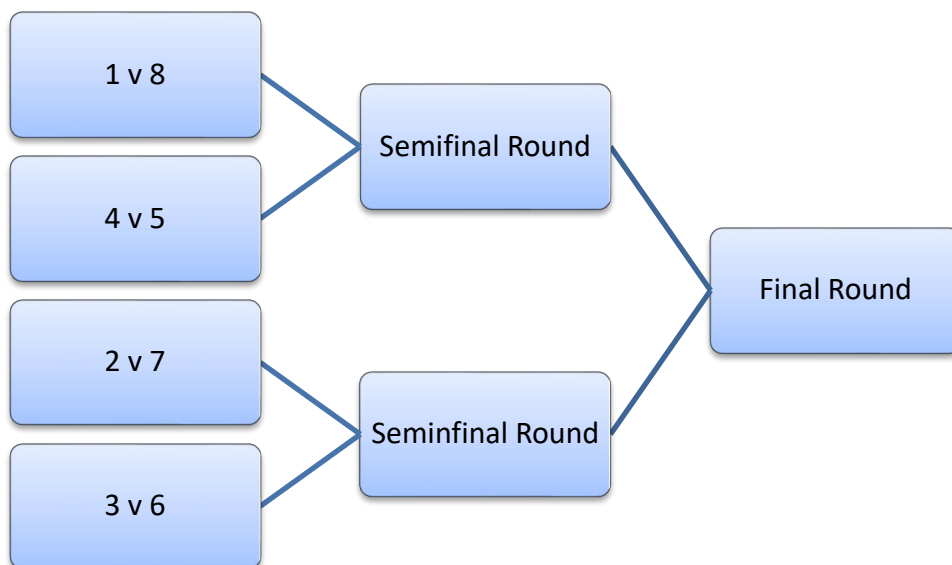
Regional competitions with an odd number of teams registered, that elect not to use a foil team, should randomly select the teams receiving a bye during the first and second preliminary rounds.

The third preliminary round is power-matched, so the last place team should receive the bye in the third preliminary round.

6.6 Break Rounds Seeding

Teams will be power protected in the quarterfinal round. So, the team ranked number one will meet the eighth ranked team; the second ranked team will meet the seventh ranked team, etc.

The winners will advance to the semifinals, as depicted below:



6.7 Party Selection in the Preliminary Rounds

Regional hosts will assign party representation to the teams in the preliminary rounds.

Each team must represent, at least once, the plaintiff and defendant during the preliminary rounds.

6.8 Party Selection in the Break Rounds

The NTC Committee recommends that regional hosts assign party representation in the break rounds using a coin flip, with the following caveats: (1) teams from the same participating school should not face each other before the final rounds; (2) teams that have previously faced each other should switch party representation from their prior matchup; (3) teams should not represent the same party against a participating school team if they represented the same party earlier in the competition against another team from the same participating school.

Below are illustrations of the last two caveats:

Teams 1 and 8 played each other in the preliminary rounds. Team 1 represented the plaintiff and Team 8 represented the defendant. If the two teams face each other in the break rounds, then they must switch their party representations. So, Team 1 will represent the defendant and Team 8 will represent the plaintiff.

Teams 3 and 6 advance to the quarterfinals. Teams 22 and 6 are from the same participating school. In a preliminary round, Team 3 and 22 competed against each other, with Team 3 representing the plaintiff and Team 22 representing the defendant. So, in the quarterfinal round, Team 6 should represent the plaintiff and Team 3 should represent the defendant.

Chapter 7: Scoring

7.1 Regional Host Scoring Responsibility

Regional hosts are responsible for checking the data, identifying the top eight teams advancing to the quarterfinal round, and determining quarterfinal team pairings.

7.2 Ballot Form

Regional hosts must use the online competition scoring system provided by the NTC Committee.

Regional hosts should double check the ballots for accuracy prior to announcing results.

7.3 Ballot Room

Regional hosts may elect to have a room where they review ballots and announce the break. The location of the ballot room, if used, should be shared with the teams during the coaches' meeting.

7.3 Selecting Scoring Ballots

Competitions must have a uniform, odd number of ballots scored during each round. However, every trial in a round must count the same number of ballots. For clarification, rounds may have either three or five scored ballots, but unless all trials during a given round have five judges, only three of the judges' ballots will be counted in each trial.

Excessive ballots should be discounted. Regional hosts should identify the discounted ballots during the relevant round before the ballots have been entered. Regional hosts should inform the schools which ballot was discarded when they provide them to the teams.

Regional hosts should discount the presiding judge's ballot when there are an even-number of judges in a round.

If excess ballots remain after the presiding judge's ballot has been discarded, regional hosts should select remaining excessive ballots to discount at random, or by some other uniform means.

Below are two illustrations:

All the trials in the first preliminary round have at least five judges. The trial with team 1 versus team 3 has six judges on its panel. The regional host should discount the presiding judge's ballot.

All the trials in the second preliminary round have at least three judges. The trial with team 1 versus team 4 has five judges on its panel. The regional host should discount the presiding judge's ballot and randomly discount one additional ballot.

7.4 Bye Round Scoring (Odd Number of Teams with No Foil Team)

Teams selected to receive a bye round, should receive a score of 1 Win, 2 Ballots, and Zero-point differential.

When determining which teams advance to the quarterfinal round, if a team with a bye gets to the third tiebreaker of point differential, then point differential will not be used—instead, a coin flip will determine which team advances.

7.5 Quarterfinal Round Team Selection

At the conclusion of the preliminary rounds, all teams must be ranked based on: (1) wins/losses, (2) ballots won, (3) point differential, and then (4) total points.

If any two teams are tied after those four categories—a coin flip will decide who advances to the quarterfinals. The winner of the coin flip will be seeded at a higher rank.

The top eight teams will advance to the quarterfinals.

Below is an example:

Team	1 st Round	2 nd Round	3 rd Round	Wins	Losses	Total Ballots	Point Differential	Total Points
1	3	3	1	2	1	7	+13	614
2	1	2	1	1	2	4	+5	652
3	3	0	2	2	1	5	+13	651
4	2	1	3	2	1	6	+73	638
5	0	0	3	1	2	3	+13	594
6	0	3	1	1	2	4	-14	607
7	0	0	0	0	3	0	-33	550
8	1	3	0	1	2	4	0	591
9	2	3	0	2	1	5	+14	645
10	3	2	3	3	0	8	+24	649

11	3	3	2	3	0	8	+16	615
12	0	1	3	1	2	4	+40	576
13	3	1	3	2	1	7	+9	592
14	3	1	0	1	2	4	-54	577
15	0	0	0	0	3	0	-59	519
16	0	3	2	2	1	5	+13	587

In this example, the following eight teams will advance to the quarterfinals:
Team Nos. 10, 11, 1, 13, 4, 9, 3, 16.

Teams 10 & 11 advance because they have three wins and no losses. These teams are ranked 1 (Team 10) and 2 (Team 11) based on ballots and then point differential. Thus, the ranking of these two teams is as follows:

Ranks	Team No.	Calculation
1	10	(8 total ballots, +24 point differential)
2	11	(8 total ballots, +16 point differential)

The remaining six teams are two-win teams with the most ballots. These remaining teams are then ranked based on total ballots and then point differential. If there is a tie in the number of total ballots and point differential, then the winner will be determined by total points. Thus, the bottom four teams advancing to the quarterfinals are:

Ranks	Team No.	Calculation
3	1	(7 total ballots, +13 point differential)
4	13	(7 total ballots, +9 point differential)
5	4	(6 total ballots, +73 point differential)
6	9	(5 total ballots, +14 point differential)
7	3	(5 total ballots, +13 point differential, 651 total points)
8	16	(5 total ballots, +13 point differential, 587 total points)

If teams tie all the way through total points, regional hosts will gather the coaches for the tied teams for a coin flip. Regional hosts may assign heads to one team and tails to another, or have the coaches play rock-paper-scissors and permit the winner to select either heads or tails.

The winner of the coin flip will be higher seeded.

7.6 Break Round Scoring

The team with the most total ballots in the round wins the round. The winner of the round advances.

7.7 Announcing Preliminary Results

The NTC Committee recommends regional hosts wait until the end of all three preliminary rounds before announcing the winners of each preliminary round trial.

7.8 Announcing Break Round Results

The winners of the break rounds should be announced by the presiding judge after the participants have received feedback from the judges.

7.9 Preliminary Rounds Ballot Results

Regional hosts must make preliminary round ballots available—upon request—to the participating schools. Regional hosts are only required to provide teams with their own ballots.

Regional hosts may elect to either make ballots available either (1) after the completion of each preliminary round or (2) after the competition of all preliminary rounds.

Ballots should be released so coaches have a reasonable amount of time to check their teams' ballots for tabulation errors before the quarterfinal round begins.

7.10 Break Score Announcement

Regional host must announce to all coaches and teams the break score for the lowest ranking team to qualify for the quarterfinal round: (1) round wins; (2) ballot wins; (3) point differential; and (4) total points.

7.11 Break Rounds Ballot Results

Regional hosts must make break round ballots available to the participating schools. Regional hosts are only required to provide teams with their own ballots.

Ballots should be released as quickly as possible after each round so coaches have a reasonable amount of time to check their teams' ballots for tabulation errors before the next round begins.

Ballots from the final round must be promptly provided to the teams.

Chapter 8: Protests

8.1 Regional Competition “Protest” Committee

Regional hosts must form a protest committee for the competition.

The rules should be strictly enforced by the regional hosts.

8.2 Sanctioning Guidelines

The protest committee, after determining that a violation has occurred, should use the following sanctioning guidelines to impose punishment, which are not exhaustive; however, it may deviate if it determines there are aggravating or mitigating circumstances, or in the interest of justice:

1. Disqualification: Disqualified teams are removed from the rankings. Prior round wins, ballots, point differential, and total points for the disqualified team, and their opponents, remain the same. In the round giving rise to the disqualifying conduct, the disqualified team’s opponent is unaffected if the opponent won the round. If, however, the disqualified team’s opponent lost the round, then the opponent’s results for the round should be changed to a win, two ballots, the same points awarded, and a zero-point differential.
2. Round Forfeiture: Teams forfeiting a round are given a loss and zero ballots. If the forfeiting team would have won the round, then they receive a zero-point differential; however, if they would have lost the round, then they receive their actual point differential, unless the point differential would be positive—in which case they receive a zero-point differential. The forfeiting team’s opponent is unaffected if they won the round. If the forfeiting team’s opponent lost the round, then the opponent’s results for the round should be changed to a win, but with the number of ballots, points awarded, and point differential remain unchanged.
3. Ballot Forfeiture: Ballot(s) may be forfeited in the round where a violation occurred. A team with forfeited ballot(s) will have their ranking adjusted to correspond with the number of forfeited ballots in the affected round. No other adjustments are made to the wins, points, or point differential.
4. Ballot Point Deductions: Points may be deducted from ballot(s) in the round where the violation occurred. Points should be deducted in decimal number increments to avoid ties. The wins, ballots, points and point differential of both teams in the round are ranked normally following the point deduction.

8.3 Protest Report

Regional hosts must send a protest report to the NTC Coordinator within **three business days** after their regional competition that identifies the protest committee coaches, the teams

involved in protests, the issues raised, the resolution, and whether the protest was frivolous in the protest committee's opinion. The protest committee should document protest information contemporaneously during the competition.

Chapter 9: Miscellaneous

9.1 Anonymity Rule

Regional hosts must instruct participating schools that no name, insignia, or logo that could identify their school (including sports and city references) should be disclosed or appear anywhere on either their screen or in their screen name during the competition.

Witnesses and judges must be instructed not to inquire into the school affiliation of the participating law schools.

Regional hosts should make every effort to ensure that no one affiliated with a participating school serves as either a judge or witness in a trial in which the participating school is competing.

9.2 Scouting Prohibited

Coaches are prohibited from talking to team members after they begin woodshedding their witnesses.

Coaches are only permitted to observe trials that their teams are competing in; however, they may observe trials after their teams are eliminated.

Coaches observing a trial must have their audio/video turned off and identify themselves in their screen name as "Coach [Team Number]."

Teams with a bye round are prohibited from watching other teams compete during their bye.

9.3 Outside Communication During Trial Prohibited

Teams are prohibited from communicating during trial with anyone other than the judges, bailiff, witnesses, their co-counsels participating in the trial, and their opponents.

9.4 Recordings Prohibited

Recordings during the competition are prohibited.

9.5 Participating Teams' Failure to Provide Witnesses

Participating schools who fail to provide witnesses as required by the regional hosts are subject to sanctions.

9.6 Failure to Hold Third Preliminary Round

The NTC Committee may punish, at its discretion, regional hosts schools for failing to hold a third preliminary round without seeking and obtaining permission to do so.

THANK YOU FOR HOSTING!