



Texas YMCA Virtual Judicial Competition

TRIAL COURT EVALUATORS QUICK REFERENCE:

General Guidelines:

- Evaluators score judge AND team performances.
- Start each team and judge with Score of 5 then add/subtract points based on performances.
- Please remember these are high school students, not college or law school students.
- Please do not consult with other evaluators or any team regarding your evaluation(s) during the competition.
- Please **write** comments on your evaluation of each team and the judge. Written feedback is very valuable for teams to receive at the conclusion of the competition.

Case Information: State of Texas v. Don Coleson

WITNESSES FOR THE PROSECUTION TEAM (STATE OF TEXAS):

1. Detective Amelie Hodges, officer
2. Kate Riley, witness
3. Dr. Joshua Sapp, medical examiner

WITNESSES FOR THE DEFENSE TEAM (Don Coleson):

1. Don Coleson, defendant
2. Diane Reagan, witness
3. Reverend Shorty McGee, witness
4. Madeline Coleson, defendant's daughter

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE THAT MAY BE ENTERED BY PROSECUTION:

- a) E-mails
- b) Notes from teacher (Kate Riley) to Done Coleson
- c) Photograph of Annabelle Lee Coleson
- d) Autopsy Report

The defense team does not have to enter evidence, but may



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Judge Scoring Criteria	Attorney Team Scoring Criteria
Calling the Court to Order: communicating any courtroom rules, swearing in witnesses, announcing that Court is in session, stating the charges against the defendant	Opening Statement: Preferably memorized, effectively delivered; attorneys inform the court what they intend to prove in the trial
Knowledge of Trial Procedure: stick to schedule of the trial, rules, and proper procedures. Does not need guidance, does not hesitate during trial proceedings	Attorney #1 Direct Exam: How well attorney #1 handles difficult witnesses and effectively extracts information with good questions
Knowledge of Evidence Rules, Objections, and the Law: Judges were required to pass a test on how to handle entering evidence, the order of who presents, etc.	Attorney #2 Direct Exam: How well attorney #2 handles difficult witnesses and effectively extracts information with good questions
Demeanor and Professionalism: Demands respect, engaged, good posture, pleasant disposition	Attorney #1 Cross Exam: How well attorney #1 effectively and assertively handles the other team's witnesses, getting the answers they need
Interaction with Trial Participants: does not let attorneys go over time, politely directs attorneys and witnesses to proceed, etc.	Attorney #2 Cross Exam: How well attorney #2 effectively and assertively handles the other team's witnesses, getting the answers they need
Decision-Making Ability: Handle objections and questions efficiently, does not get thrown off by unexpected events	Use of Exhibits and Evidence: Attorneys use evidence throughout their presentation. Exhibits are marked, offered & entered into evidence properly, and used effectively NOTE: the judge should know the procedure
Maintaining Control of Courtroom: Preside effectively, keep time, make a ruling and explain why a team won NOTE: The verdict of the judge does not affect evaluators' score of each team	Knowledge of Trial Procedure: stick to schedule of the trial, know rules and proper procedures; always be relevant, effective and fair to proceedings and to other team
	Objections: State objections in legal terms and respond to objections of the other team
	Overall Demeanor: respectful interaction with judge and opposing team; standing when addressing the Court or addressed by the judge
	Witnesses: Performance (knowledge of affidavit, demeanor, character)
	Preparation: Very well-organized, prepared use of facts, effective teamwork
	Closing Argument: Persuasiveness, effective use of rebuttal, effective and fair summary of the trial