

# TIMEKEEPER MANUAL

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NHSMTC

2024



NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL  
MOCK TRIAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Welcome to the 2024 National High School Mock Trial Championship! Each competing team must have one timekeeper per round. In addition to this Timekeeping Guide, any students serving as a timekeeper during the National High School Mock Trial Championship must attend an in-person orientation session on Thursday, May 2 at the Chase Center on the Riverfront.

### **Timekeeping rules**

All mock trial team members should review the Rules of Competition and be familiar with the substance of the Rules of Competition. Timekeepers and timekeeping are governed by the following rules and each timekeeper should review these rules carefully. These rules include:

- Rule 1.4 (general rules for Student Timekeepers)
- Rule 3.3. (composition of teams)
- Rule 4.5 (trial sequence and time limits)
- Rule 4.6 (rules for timekeeping)
- Rule 4.7 (time extensions and scoring)
- Rule 4.12 (communications at trial)
- Rule 4.20.A (introduction of exhibits)
- Rule 4.24 (critiques following trial)
- Rule 6.1.A (disputes at the conclusion of the trial)

### **Timekeeping supplies**

During timekeeper orientation, we will provide each team with the following materials:

- One (1) copy of this guide;
- One (1) full set of timecards, which includes:
  - One set of opening / closing timecards,
  - One set of direct timecards,
  - One set of cross timecards;
- Four copies of the timekeeping sheet, one for each round
  - Each timekeeper must sign their own timekeeping sheet at the completion of the round,
  - Each timekeeper must return their timekeeping sheet to the presiding judge before the judges leave the courtroom to complete their score sheets.

- Two (2) stopwatch timers
  - Each team must use one (1) timer for keeping time for the Plaintiff and one (1) timer for keeping time for the Defense,
  - Timekeepers may use their own stopwatches (and may use phones provided they are in airplane mode).
  - We will have a limited number of stopwatches available for teams.

Teams are responsible for providing:

- At least two marking devices (one as a backup) for marking the timekeeping sheet;
- A hard surface for the timekeepers to use to write. Please note that this is optional, but timekeepers will generally be seated in a jury box without a hard surface available.

### **Timekeeper responsibilities**

Each team is responsible for training at least one team member to serve as the team's timekeeper. The timekeeper from each side will work together to ensure accurate time has been kept for both teams. They will each show the Timecards simultaneously and notify the Presiding Judge when time has expired for any given portion of the trial by showing the STOP timecard.

Team members are responsible for being proficient with the information in the National High School Mock Trial Championship Rules of Competition and this Timekeeping Manual. The team's timekeeper(s) should be familiar with the trial sequence and have practiced filling out the Timekeeping Sheet before the competition begins. The individual(s) serving as the timekeeper(s) must be noted on the team's roster.

### **Timekeeping duties**

A team's timekeeper for each round must:

- Ensure that the timekeeper's name is on each team's roster;
- Ensure that they have the materials necessary for each round (as outlined in the Timekeeping supplies section above)
- Enter the courtroom and sit together at the end of the jury box closest to the witness stand (or other appropriate place if no jury box is available). Timekeepers should be positioned so that both sides' attorneys and the presiding judge can easily see them;
- Discuss with the opposing side's timekeeper any audible or visible cues that both of you will use to determine when to start and stop timing the round;
- Enter the round number and team codes in the space provided on the top portion of the timekeeping sheet;
- Arrange stopwatches and timecards;

- Rise when the presiding judge enters the courtroom and be seated when the presiding judge grants permission;
- Work together with your opposing timekeeper as a neutral timekeeping team to ensure that time is kept accurately and fairly for both sides during a round;
- Ensure that a stopwatch is reset to zero ONLY at the following times:
  - At the beginning of each side's opening statement,
  - At the beginning of each side's direct examination,
  - At the beginning of each side's cross examination,
  - At the beginning of each side's closing argument,
- Ensure that stopwatches are not reset to zero at any other time, including:
  - At the end of direct and cross-examination (as you will need to resume direct or cross timing for redirect and re-cross),
  - At the end of the plaintiff's closing argument (as you will need to resume for rebuttal, if applicable),
- Start timing when each attorney starts to speak (that is, when the attorney said the first word in their opening, closing, or examination question);
- Stop timing during objections, responses to objections, questioning by the judge, and when the attorney says their last word in a given task.

### **Additional rules for recording time**

Timekeepers must not count the following time:

- When an attorney
  - responds to a presiding judge's inquiry as to whether or not the side is ready to proceed,
  - asks to reserve time for a rebuttal,
  - requests permission to use / move a podium or to move freely about the courtroom;
- From the time a witness is called until the time the witness takes the witness stand;
- From the time an objection is raised until after the ruling by the presiding judge and the examining attorney says the first word to continue the examination;
- If a judge raises questions to a team or the judging panel.

Timekeepers must count the time used by an attorney to introduce exhibits or other evidence.

### **Additional duties during trial**

Timekeepers must:

- display timecards simultaneously throughout the round to both teams (attorneys and witnesses) and the presiding judge and only at the intervals set out on the timecards
- display the STOP card to both teams, the presiding judge, and the scoring judges;
- record the cumulative time used on the timekeeping sheet at the end of each trial segment;
- check with their opposing timekeeper at the end of each trial segment to make sure that both stopwatches for that segment are within fifteen (15) seconds of each other and, if not, follow the procedures outlined in the “Timekeeping discrepancies” portion of the manual, consistent with the Rules of Competition;

### **Duties following trial**

Following the completion of trial, each timekeeper must:

- Time the additional argument per side that occurs if, after trial, either side informs the Court that it wishes to file a dispute and a dispute hearing is granted;
- Add your name and signature to the timekeeping sheet and turn it in to the presiding judge before they leave the courtroom;
- Reset their stopwatches to zero in preparation to time the debriefing.

### **Disputes at the Conclusion of the Trial**

At the conclusion of each trial, the presiding judge must inquire of the teams whether either team believes that a substantial violation of the rules occurred during trial. The competing team members are permitted to consult for a time not to exceed two minutes with the team’s coaches before determining whether the team wishes to raise any substantial violations it believes occurred.

If a team believes a dispute occurred, one of the student members of one of the competing teams shall state that the team wishes to file a claim that a substantial rules violation occurred (a “dispute”). The presiding judge will provide the student with a dispute form, on which the student will record in writing the nature of the dispute. No more than two minutes per team shall be allotted for this process. The student may communicate with his/her team members and coaches in preparing the form. The team accused of a material rules violation shall have the opportunity to respond in writing. No more than two minutes per team shall be allotted for this process. The student may communicate with her/his team members and coaches in preparing the form. One member of each team shall briefly present the team’s position to the presiding judge. No more than two minutes per team shall be allotted for this explanation. The presiding judge shall ask any questions and perform any additional investigation s/he

believes appropriate.

### **After the Recess**

Politely remind the judges that both timekeepers will be timing the debrief and that a maximum of 10 minutes is allotted to that portion of the round. Start timing from 10 minutes when the judges begin giving their debrief. Signal the judges following the timecard from the 5-minute mark. When 10 minutes have passed, timekeepers will hold up the STOP card to politely signal to the judges that the debrief session has ended.

When court is adjourned, timekeepers should help their teams straighten up the courtroom and ensure they have collected all their Timekeeping Materials in preparation for subsequent rounds.

### **Timekeeping Discrepancies**

At the end of each segment of the trial (i.e., at the end of each opening statement, at the end of each direct examination or cross-examination of a witness, and at the end of each closing argument), if there is a timing discrepancy of more than 15 seconds between the two timekeepers, the following rules will apply:

Any timing discrepancies between timekeepers of 15 seconds or less WILL NOT be considered a timing discrepancy.

- If a timing discrepancy of more than 15 seconds has occurred, timekeepers are to notify the presiding judge that a timing discrepancy has occurred.
- Timekeepers may raise timing discrepancies ONLY at the end of each phase of the trial presentation as outlined above.
  - The Presiding Judge will rule on any timing discrepancy before the trial continues.
  - Timekeepers will synchronize stopwatches to match the Presiding Judge's ruling. For example, if the "P" stopwatch indicates 2 minutes left for "P's" case and the "D" stopwatch indicates time is expired, the Presiding Judge might decide to split the difference in the timing variation and give P's side 1 minute to conclude. Both sides would adjust timing to allow for the 1 minute timing decision.
- No time disputes will be entertained after the trial concludes.
- The decision of the Presiding Judge regarding the resolution of timing disputes is final.