



# Rules of Competition

## For The Yale Moot Court Tournament

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## **1. Goals And Purpose**

The Yale Moot Court Tournament is meant to be a space for high school students to develop their oral advocacy skills through rigorous competition. In this space, competing students and their coaches are expected to conduct themselves with professionalism and sportsmanship at all times. While participating in the Yale Moot Court Tournament, competitors are expected to abide by all laws of the jurisdiction in which they are competing.

These Rules are constructed, and shall be applied, with the intention of promoting learning, fair competition, and an appreciation for moot court. These rules are the final authority for resolving all conflicts within the tournament.

## **2. Eligibility And Team Composition**

### **2.1. Eligibility.**

All competitors must be enrolled in middle school, high school, or the equivalents in their educational jurisdiction. Competitors on a given team must attend the same school unless they have permission from the tournament director to compete otherwise. Competitors from all institutions must designate one coach who is not competing in the tournament to serve as their institution's official representative.

### **2.2. Registration.**

All competitors must have their names, contact information, coaches (if applicable), and school registered with [yumc@yalemootcourt.org](mailto:yumc@yalemootcourt.org) by April 15th, 2022. There is no limit to the number of competitors that can be registered from one school, and schools may add more

competitors at any time until April 15th, 2022. Teams must pay the registration fee on or before April 20th, 2021.

**2.3. No Substitutions.**

A team of the same two competitors must represent the Petitioner and/or the Respondent for every round of the Tournament. Substitutions are not permitted once the Tournament begins. Teams who are missing competitors can, with the permission of the tournament director, have one competitor speak on both issues. Permission will be granted only for unforeseen exigent circumstances.

**3. Conduct Of Tournament Rounds.**

**3.1. Timekeeping.**

**3.1.1. Timekeeping - General.**

Prior to the beginning of each round, each team shall indicate to the timekeeper and judges how it wishes to allocate its time. Each team shall have 20 minutes to divide between the team's two competitors. No competitor shall have an allocated speaking time shorter than seven minutes, and no competitor shall have an allocated speaking time longer than thirteen minutes.

**3.1.2. If There Is No Official Timekeeper.**

If there is no timekeeper to monitor time, and there is no other individual in the courtroom whom the judges can appoint as timekeeper, each team shall keep time for the opposing team.

**3.1.3. Timekeeping - Communication.**

Time should be kept using a computer- or tablet-based timing program, like vClock, Google, or a device timer app. Timekeepers, official or competing, should share the timer on-screen in view of all competitors and judges using Zoom's "share screen" function. When time has elapsed, the timekeeper should unmute themselves and call "time," unless the speaking competitor has received an extension pursuant to Rule 3.1.6.

**3.1.4. Timekeeping - Technical Difficulties.**

At the discretion of the Chief Justice, competitors may request that timekeeping stop while substantially disruptive technical difficulties are being resolved.

**3.1.5. Timekeeping For Rebuttal.**

Petitioners may reserve up to three minutes for rebuttal only before beginning their oral argument. This time must be allocated from the 20 total minutes allowed for the petitioner's argument.

**3.1.6. Extension Of Oral Argument.**

Judges may permit a brief extension of oral argument if a competitor's time is exhausted while they are answering a judge's question and they request such an extension. Outside this exception, competitors shall stop speaking when their allocated time has elapsed.

**3.2. Use of Resources.**

**3.2.1. Use Of Notes And Visual Aids.**

Competitors may use notes at any time during the round. No presentation devices or exhibits of any kind may be used in oral argument. Competitors may not submit a written brief to the bench.

**3.2.2. No Coaching During Rounds.**

No person, other than a competitor's partner, may contact or attempt to contact by any means, whether personally or through another person, directly or indirectly, verbally or nonverbally, a competitor during a round for the purpose of giving advice, counsel, suggestions, or support.

**3.2.3. Use Of Cell Phones, Smart Watches, And Similar Devices.**

Virtual tournaments will be conducted on Zoom. Students may participate using either a computer or tablet. Cell phones, smart watches, and similar communication devices are prohibited.

**3.2.3.1. Communication With The Tournament Director.**

The prohibition in Rule 3.2.3 does not apply to communications with the Tournament Director. Technological problems should be addressed to the Tournament Director.

**3.2.3.2. Use Of Devices For Timekeeping.**

In the case that a computer cannot be used for timekeeping, a phone may substitute only for the purposes of timekeeping at the discretion of the Chief Justice.

**3.2.3.3. Communication Between Partners.**

During a virtual round, competitors may communicate with their partners, and only their partners, using the Zoom chat.

**3.3. Who May Be Present In The Courtroom.**

Virtual tournaments will be conducted on Zoom. Only competitors, judges, bailiffs, and coaches may log in to the virtual rounds. No person affiliated with any school may observe any round in which their school is not participating, except for non-competing YUMC-affiliated tournament staff acting in an official capacity. Judges must have their video and audio on at all

times except for during ballot deliberation. All other participants in the round must turn on video and mute audio unless speaking or on a shared device.

**3.3.1. Sharing Information Is Prohibited.**

Teams shall not disclose to one another any detailed information about their previous opponents or judges. Disclosure of judges' questions or opponents' arguments is prohibited and contrary to the spirit of the Yale Moot Court Tournament. This prohibition applies equally to communication between teams representing the same institution and teams representing separate institutions. Similarly, a coach or advisor who observes a round shall not discuss the details of the round with any competitors who did not participate in the round.

**3.3.2. Final Rounds.**

With the unanimous consent of teams competing in final and third-place rounds, these rounds may be opened to observation by all registered participants in the tournament, their coaches or advisors (if applicable), and any others at the discretion of the Tournament Director.

**3.4. Elements Of The Round.**

**3.4.1. Order Of Elements.**

Elements of every tournament round shall proceed in the following order:

1. Competitor Introductions (at the discretion of the chief justice)
2. Petitioner Case (Up to 20 minutes)
  - 2a. Petitioner first speaker
  - 2b. Petitioner second speaker
3. Respondent Case (20 minutes)
  - 3a. Respondent first speaker
  - 3b. Respondent second speaker
4. Petitioner's Rebuttal (up to three minutes, counted against the Petitioner's 20 minutes)
5. Scoring and Feedback

**3.4.2. Rebuttal.**

The purpose of a rebuttal is to respond to the Respondent's arguments, and it is inappropriate for competitors to attempt to introduce new arguments during the rebuttal.

**3.4.3. Feedback.**

After hearing arguments from both teams, and only after resolving any disputes and submitting their ballots, judges should, if time permits, offer evaluations of performance in a short "feedback" period.

### 3.5. Closed Problems.

(Adapted from AMCA Rule 3.14) The AMCA Case Problem exists in a closed universe. Students may discuss cases outside the Table of Authorities solely to the extent that they are quoted and cited within the official cases. Judges will be instructed to deduct points as a penalty for use of prohibited materials.

Comment to Rule 3.5: For example, if a case is simply included in a string citation, that case cannot be discussed unless the student says that this case of X v. Y was cited by the court in [official case within the record] to support its holding. Any detailed discussion of the facts or reasoning of X v. Y would be inappropriate unless those matters specifically appear in the official case.

## 4. Structure Of The Tournament

### 4.1. Length Of The Tournament.

The tournament shall run for two days. There will be three rounds on the first day and four rounds on the second day. Before the first round on the first day, the tournament will begin with an opening ceremony. After the second round on the second day, the tournament will end with an awards ceremony followed by two elimination rounds.

### 4.2. The Swiss System.

All teams will have an opportunity to compete in the first five rounds of the tournament, unless the tournament is composed of an odd number of teams, in which case one team in each round will be assigned to a bye round. Pairings in the first round will be assigned randomly. In subsequent rounds, teams will be paired using a Swiss system under Rules 4.2.1 - 4.2.5. See Appendix A for a demonstration of how the Swiss system works.

#### 4.2.1. Team Rankings.

At the end of each tournament round after the first round, teams will be ranked by the following criteria in the order listed:

1. The number of rounds in which the team was victorious
2. The total number of ballots on which the team was victorious
4. The cumulative difference in points between the team and their prior opponents
5. The total number of points scored by the team in all of their rounds

#### 4.2.2. Scoring Standardized To Three Ballots.

The number of ballots submitted in all rounds will be standardized to three ballots. Tie ballots will count as 0.5 ballots each before they are standardized. After each round, a team will be awarded a number of ballots determined by the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{the number of ballots the team won in the round}}{\text{the total number of ballots possible in the round}} \times 3 \text{ ballots.}$$

If, for example, in a round with four judges, a team wins three ballots and ties with their opponents on one ballot, they will be awarded

$$\frac{3.5 \text{ ballots}}{4 \text{ ballots}} \times 3 \text{ ballots} = 2.625 \text{ ballots.}$$

For the fourth and fifth criteria under Rule 4.2.1, the number of points earned in each round will be standardized to three ballots, computed by multiplying a team's average number of points per ballot in the round by three ballots.

**4.2.3. Team Pairings.**

For all rounds after the first round, teams will be grouped according to the number of rounds in which they were victorious. Groups will be adjusted to include an even number of teams. Within their groups, teams will be matched first to first below the median, second to second below the median, and so on, by their ranking under Rule 4.2.1. If there are an odd number of teams participating in the tournament, the tournament director will further adjust the composition of the groups as necessary.

Pairings will be adjusted to prevent teams from facing each other more than once.

**4.2.4. Bye Rounds.**

For the first round, bye rounds will be assigned randomly. For the third and following rounds of the tournament, the team ranked lowest under Rule 4.2.1 will receive a bye round. Bye assignments will be adjusted so that no team is assigned a bye round more than once.

**4.2.4.1. Scoring In Bye Rounds.**

For the purpose of team pairings, teams assigned bye rounds will count as the victors of the round and will take three ballots. They will receive the average number of points and the average point differential from their previous rounds, calculated retroactively after the second round for teams assigned a bye in the first round. A team assigned a bye round will be in the lowest pairing group for the next round.

**4.3. Elimination Rounds**

The sixth and seventh rounds of the tournament will consist of four teams in a single-elimination bracket. In the sixth, "semifinal" round, teams will be paired first to fourth and second to third. The winning teams from the sixth round will face each other in the seventh "final" round. The winning team in the final round will win the tournament. The losing teams from the semifinal round will face each other in the seventh round to decide third place.

**5. Violations Of The Rules.**

**5.1. Minor Violations**

(Adapted from AMCA Rule 9.1.1) If a team believes that an opposing team has violated the Rules for the Yale Moot Court Tournament, such as by utilizing material from cases outside

the Table of Authorities, it is the responsibility of that team to bring such a violation to the attention of the Judges during the course of oral argument. The Judges shall deduct points for any rule violation as they deem appropriate.

## **5.2. Major Violations**

If, after a round, a team or their coach (if applicable) feels that their opponent has egregiously violated the rules, then they may complain to the tournament director using the [major complaint form](#). The following constitute a non-exclusive list of egregious violations of the rules:

- Issues that would be too contentious to handle during a round, including coaching during a round in violation of Rule 3.2.2
- Serious issues that students are uncomfortable addressing, including physical or verbal abuse of any person in the courtroom
- Issues more appropriate for tournament staff than presiding judges, including the use of an ineligible person as a team member

The tournament director, or a representative of the tournament director, shall adjudicate the violation in a manner consistent with the text of these rules, the purpose of these rules, and the goals of the tournament.



## Appendix A: The Swiss System

**Figure 1: Pairing Groups by Swiss-System Round**

Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	
A v. B C v. D E v. F G v. H I v. J K v. L M v. N O v. P	Winning Teams (1-0) A v. O C v. M E v. K G v. I	Winning Teams (2-0) A v. G C v. E	Winning Teams (3-0) A v. C	
	Losing Teams (0-1) B v. P D v. N F v. L H v. J	Losing Teams (1-1) B v. I D v. K	Losing Teams (2-1) F v. M H v. O	Losing Teams (2-1) O v. G M v. E K v. I
		Winning Teams (1-1) P v. J N v. L	Winning Teams (1-2) P v. J N v. L	Winning Teams (1-2) P v. B N v. F D v. P
		Losing Teams (0-2) P v. J N v. L	Losing Teams (0-3) P v. J N v. L	Losing Teams (0-3) J v. L

### Ranking Example

Team A v. Team O, Round 2 in the table above:

Let's say that four judges presided over the round. Here's the data from their ballots:

Judge 1		Judge 2		Judge 3		Judge 4	
Team A: 38 Points	Team O: 32 Points	Team A: 34 Points	Team O: 28 Points	Team A: 35 Points	Team O: 27 Points	Team A: 34 Points	Team O: 34 Points
38 > 32 ⇒ A Wins		34 > 28 ⇒ A Wins		35 > 27 ⇒ A Wins		34 = 34 ⇒ Tie	

Because they won a majority of the ballots, this round would count as a win for Team A.

In terms of raw ballots, Team A takes 3.5 ballots and Team O takes 0.5 ballots.

Standardizing to three ballots using the formula in Rule 4.2.2:

$$\text{Team A: } \frac{3.5 \text{ ballots}}{4 \text{ ballots}} \times 3 \text{ ballots} = 2.625 \text{ ballots}$$

$$\text{Team O: } \frac{0.5 \text{ ballots}}{4 \text{ ballots}} \times 3 \text{ ballots} = 0.375 \text{ ballots}$$

$$\text{Team A takes } \frac{38+34+35+34 \text{ points}}{4 \text{ ballots}} \times 3 \text{ ballots} = 105.75 \text{ points}$$

$$\text{Team O takes } \frac{32+28+27+34 \text{ points}}{4 \text{ ballots}} \times 3 \text{ ballots} = 90.75 \text{ points}$$

Team A would have point differential  $105.75 - 90.75 = 15$  points.

Team O would have point differential  $90.75 - 105.75 = -15$  points.

## **Appendix B: The Scoring Rubric**

Scoring in the Yale Moot Court Tournament will be identical to the Scoring described in AMCA Rule 5.1, with one exception: Rather than using a 100 point scoring system, the Tournament will use a 10 point scoring system in each of the 4 categories. The judge guidelines for each of the 10 scores are as follows:

10- Perfect, can think of no real flaws. Very few participants will receive a 10 in any category

9- Excellent, very noticeably better than other teams and among the best in the tournament

8- Good, better than most in this category

7- Average, most common score, middle of the pack

6- Below Average, worse than most teams

5- Bad, reserved for a few distinctly poor performances in a category

1-4 Anything that you don't think deserves even a 5 to varying degrees