



ORAL ARGUMENT INSTRUCTIONS & JUDGING CRITERIA PRELIMINARY ROUNDS

There are two oralists per team. Each oralist is graded on a total 50-point scale. The individual categories below with point values are there to assist in assessing the arguments. The final score is the key number. You do not need to fill out all of the individual items on the score sheets. Each judge should grade each oralist individually. Judges are welcome to consult with each other when evaluating oralists. **An average overall score is 35 points.**

To ensure fairness to all teams, competitors and judges are to adhere to the time limits set forth in Rule V (D)(2), which states that “[j]udges, at their discretion, may interrupt arguments to ask questions but may NOT allow additional time.”

A Best Oralist should be selected from the six oralists arguing. The Best Oralist should be determined using subjective standards and need not be the competitor with the highest score. The judges should confer with each other and come to a unanimous conclusion regarding the Best Oralist. Each judge should write the name of the unanimous, agreed-on Best Oralist on their individual score sheet.

IMPORTANT: The party that a team represents is chosen randomly. Each oralist should be **judged on his/her ability to argue the assigned position rather than on the merits of the case.**

ORGANIZATION & PREPARATION

10 POINTS

- Does counsel state who he/she is and who he/she is representing, introduce the issues and facts clearly, present a strong opening, argue the strongest point first and present a persuasive and generalized conclusion?
- Is counsel clearly prepared and familiar with the cases on which his/her arguments rely?
- If rebuttal is used, is it used effectively?

COURTROOM PRESENTATION

10 POINTS

- Is counsel’s presentation appropriately paced, free of mannerisms and loud enough?
- Does counsel use inflection to avoid monotone delivery, make eye contact with the bench, balance due deference with a forceful and professional argument, read arguments or argue them and “stick to his/her guns”?
- Is counsel poised and tactful under pressure?
- Most importantly, is counsel’s presentation the most convincing and persuasive, regardless of the merits of the case?

HANDLING OF QUESTIONS

15 POINTS

- Does counsel answer questions directly and on point, properly turn the questions to his/her client’s own advantage?

LEGAL REASONING

15 POINTS

- Does counsel use the best authorities, make policy arguments properly, emphasize the strongest points, anticipate opening arguments, persuasively distinguish opposing authority, and convincingly apply the argument and authorities to the facts of the case?

TOTAL 50 POINTS