**Guidelines for Organizing School Mock Trials**

**INTRODUCTION**

As the coordinator of the mock trial, your responsibility entails ensuring a seamless court proceeding while fostering a conducive learning environment for the students. It is crucial to ensure that students grasp the goals of the mock trial and feel at ease throughout the simulation. Emphasize that the primary aim is educational, promoting both learning and enjoyment.

Acknowledge the potential anxiety some students might experience due to public speaking. Assure them of your support—should they find themselves at a loss for words, a time-out signal will summon your assistance. Similarly, you can initiate a time-out to provide guidance or facilitate group suggestions for any struggling participant.

This guide aims to equip you with the necessary tools for orchestrating a successful mock trial and addressing inquiries regarding courtroom protocols.

**TYPES OF MOCK TRIALS**

Mock trials come in two formats: scripted and role-play. In scripted trials, students are assigned predefined roles, while role-play trials require students to craft their arguments based on given case facts, adhering to standard courtroom procedures.

Both formats encompass similar role designations, including:

* Judge
* Prosecuting Attorney
* Defense Attorney
* Victim
* Witnesses
* Defendant
* Expert Witnesses
* Court Clerk
* Bailiff
* Juror

Civil mock trials will feature plaintiffs and their attorneys instead of the prosecuting team and victims.

**SCRIPTED MOCK TRIAL**

* Assign roles to student volunteers after selecting a case scenario. Non-speaking participants can serve on the jury.
* Arrange the classroom to resemble a courtroom and initiate the trial with the opening statement.
* Upon script completion, allow jury deliberation, either publicly or in a fishbowl arrangement, followed by the verdict announcement.
* Post-trial, engage students in a discussion addressing their role challenges, evaluation of arguments, and the trial’s fairness.

**ROLE-PLAY MOCK TRIAL**

* Distribute the case facts to students for individual or homework review, allowing them to consider their preferred roles and preparations.
* Allocate roles with remaining students constituting the jury.
* Follow the structured trial phases (attached) from opening statements to witness examinations and closing arguments.
* Permit jury deliberation and verdict declaration, followed by a reflective discussion similar to the scripted mock trial’s.

**MAKING OBJECTIONS**

Courtroom proceedings observe intricate evidence admission rules, ensuring equitable hearings. Below is a streamlined version of these rules applicable to your role-play mock trial.

Attorneys can raise objections if they believe the opposition is breaching evidence rules (excluding opening and closing statements). The judge, after hearing both sides, will either sustain or overrule the objection.

**RULES OF EVIDENCE**

* **Irrelevant Objection:** Raised when a statement, question, or exhibit doesn’t contribute to resolving the case’s issues.
* **Leading Objection:** Occurs during direct examination when an attorney’s question suggests the expected answer.
* **Hearsay Objection:** Applies to statements made outside the court, introduced to assert their truth. Exceptions exist, especially involving contradictory statements or relevant mental states.
* **Lack of Personal Knowledge Objection:** Invoked when a witness testifies on matters not directly witnessed or experienced.
* **Opinion Objection:** Standard witnesses can’t offer opinions unless commonly experiential. Expert witnesses’ opinions are admissible with foundational explanations.
* **Speculation Objection:** Raised when witnesses guess the answers.

**CONCLUSION**

Adhering to these guidelines will ensure an engaging, educational, and enjoyable mock trial experience for all participating students. Adapt and customize these steps as needed to fit your classroom’s unique needs and objectives.