

II. NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL MOCK TRIAL CHAMPIONSHIP FEDERAL RULES OF EVIDENCE (Mock Trial Version)

In American trials, complex rules are used to govern the admission of proof (i.e., oral or physical evidence). These rules are designed to ensure that all parties receive a fair hearing and to exclude evidence deemed irrelevant, incompetent, untrustworthy, unduly prejudicial, or otherwise improper. If it appears that a rule of evidence is being violated, an attorney may raise an objection to the judge. The judge then decides whether the rule has been violated and whether the evidence must be excluded from the record of the trial. In the absence of a properly made objection, however, the judge will probably allow the evidence. The burden is on the mock trial team to know the National High School Mock Trial Rules of Evidence and to be able to use them to protect their client and fairly limit the actions of opposing counsel and their witnesses.

For purposes of mock trial competition, the Rules of Evidence have been modified and simplified. They are based on the Federal Rules of Evidence and its numbering system. Where rule numbers or letters are skipped, those rules were not deemed applicable to mock trial procedure. Text in italics or underlined represent simplified or modified language.

Not all judges will interpret the Rules of Evidence (or procedure) the same way, and mock trial attorneys should be prepared to point out specific rules (quoting, if necessary) and to argue persuasively for the interpretation and application of the rule they think appropriate.

The Mock Trial Rules of Competition and these National High School Mock Trial Rules of Evidence govern the National High School Mock Trial Championship.

ARTICLE I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Rule 101. Scope

These National High School Mock Trial Rules of Evidence govern the trial proceedings of the National High School Mock Trial Championship.

Rule 102. Purpose and Construction

These Rules are intended to secure fairness in administration of the trials, eliminate unjust delay, and promote the laws of evidence so that the truth may be ascertained.

ARTICLE II. JUDICIAL NOTICE -- Not Applicable

ARTICLE III. PRESUMPTIONS IN CIVIL ACTIONS AND PROCEEDINGS -- Not Applicable

ARTICLE IV. RELEVANCY AND ITS LIMITS

Rule 401. Definition of “Relevant Evidence”

“Relevant evidence” means evidence having any tendency to make the existence of any fact that is of consequence to the determination of the action more probable or less probable than it would be without the evidence.

Rule 402. Relevant Evidence Generally Admissible: Irrelevant Evidence Inadmissible

Relevant evidence is admissible, except as otherwise provided in these Rules. *Irrelevant evidence is not admissible.*

Rule 403. Exclusion of Relevant Evidence on Grounds of Prejudice, Confusion, or Waste of Time

Although relevant, evidence may be excluded if its probative value is outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice, *if it confuses the issues, if it is misleading, or if it causes undue delay, wastes time, or is a needless presentation of cumulative evidence.*

Rule 404. Character Evidence Not Admissible to Prove Conduct, Exceptions; Other Crimes

(a) Character Evidence. - Evidence of a person's character or *character trait*, is not admissible to prove *action regarding* a particular occasion, except:

- (1) Character of accused. - Evidence of a pertinent character trait offered by an accused, or by the Plaintiff to rebut same;
- (2) Character of victim. - Evidence of a pertinent character trait of the victim of the crime offered by an accused, or by the Plaintiff to rebut same, or evidence of a character trait of peacefulness of the victim offered by the Plaintiff in a homicide case to rebut evidence that the victim was the aggressor;
- (3) Character of witness. - Evidence of the character of a witness as provided in Rules 607, 608 and 609.

(b) Other crimes, wrongs, or acts. - Evidence of other crimes, wrongs, or acts is not admissible to prove character of a person in order to show an action conforms to character. It may, however, be admissible for other purposes, such as proof of motive, opportunity, intent, preparation, plan, knowledge, identity, or absence of mistake or accident.

Rule 405. Methods of Proving Character

(a) Reputation or opinion. - In all cases where evidence of character or a *character trait* is admissible, proof may be made by testimony as to reputation or in the form of an opinion. On cross-examination, *questions may be asked regarding relevant, specific conduct.*

(b) Specific instances of conduct. - In cases where character or a character trait is an essential element of a charge, claim, or defense, proof may also be made of specific instances of that person's conduct.

Rule 406. Habit, Routine Practice

Evidence of the habit of a person or the routine practice of an organization, whether corroborated or not and regardless of the presence of eyewitnesses, is relevant to prove that the conduct of the person or organization, on a particular occasion, was in conformity with the habit or routine practice.

Rule 407. Subsequent Remedial Measures

When measures are taken after an event which, if taken before, would have made the event less likely to occur, evidence of the subsequent measures is not admissible to prove negligence or culpable conduct in connection with the event. This rule does not require the exclusion of evidence of subsequent measures when offered for another purpose - such as proving ownership, control, or feasibility of precautionary measures, if controverted, or impeachment.

Rule 408. Compromise and Offers to Compromise

Evidence of (1) furnishing or offering or promising to furnish, or (2) accepting or offering or promising to accept, a valuable consideration in compromising or attempting to compromise a claim which was disputed as to either validity or amount, is not admissible to prove liability for or invalidity of the claim or its amount. Evidence of conduct or statements made in compromise negotiations is likewise not admissible. This rule does not require the exclusion of any evidence otherwise discoverable merely because it is presented in the course of compromise negotiations. This rule also does not require exclusion when the evidence is offered for another purpose, such as proving bias or prejudice of a witness, negating a contention of undue delay, or proving an effort to obstruct a criminal investigation or prosecution.

Rule 409. Payment of Medical or Similar Expenses

Evidence of furnishing or offering or promising to pay medical, hospital, or similar expenses occasioned by an injury is not admissible to prove liability for the injury.

Rule 410. Inadmissibility of Pleas, Plea Discussions, and Related Statements

Except as otherwise provided in this Rule, evidence of the following is not, in any civil or criminal proceeding, admissible against a defendant who made the plea or was a participant in the plea discussions:

- (1) a plea of guilty which was later withdrawn;
- (2) a plea of *nolo contendere*;
- (3) any statement made in the course of any proceeding under Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure or comparable state proceeding regarding either of the foregoing pleas; or
- (4) any statement made in the course of plea discussions with an attorney for the prosecuting authority which does not result in a plea of guilty or which results in a plea of guilty which is later withdrawn.

However, such a statement is admissible (1) in any proceeding wherein another statement made in the course of the same plea or plea discussions has been introduced and the statement ought, in fairness, be considered with it, or (2) in a criminal proceeding for perjury or false statement if the statement was made by the defendant under oath, on the record and in the presence of counsel.

Rule 411. Liability Insurance (*civil case only*)

Evidence that a person was or was not insured against liability is not admissible upon the issue whether the person acted negligently or otherwise wrongfully. This rule does not require the exclusion of evidence of insurance against liability when offered for another purpose, such as

proof of agency, ownership, or control, or bias or prejudice of a witness.

ARTICLE V. PRIVILEGES

Rule 501. General Rule

There are certain admissions and communications excluded from evidence on grounds of public policy. Among these are:

- (1) communications between husband and wife;
- (2) communications between attorney and client;
- (3) communications among grand jurors;
- (4) secrets of state; and
- (5) communications between psychiatrist and patient.

ARTICLE VI. WITNESSES

Rule 601. General Rule of Competency

Every person is competent to be a witness.

Rule 602. Lack of Personal Knowledge

A witness may not testify to a matter unless the witness has personal knowledge of the matter. Evidence to prove personal knowledge may, but need not, consist of the witness' own testimony. This rule is subject to the provisions of Rule 703, related to opinion testimony by expert witnesses. (See Rule 2.2)

Rule 607. Who May Impeach

The credibility of a witness may be attacked by any party, including the party calling the witness.

Rule 608. Evidence of Character and Conduct of Witness

(a) Opinion and reputation evidence of character. - The credibility of a witness may be attacked or supported by evidence in the form of opinion or reputation, but subject to these limitations: (1) the evidence may refer only to character for truthfulness or untruthfulness, and (2) evidence of truthful character is admissible only after the character of the witness for truthfulness has been attacked by opinion or reputation evidence, or otherwise.

(b) Specific instances of conduct. - Specific instances of the conduct of a witness, for the purpose of attacking or supporting the witness' credibility, other than conviction of crime as provided in Rule 609, may not be proved by extrinsic evidence. They may, however, in the discretion of the Court, if probative of truthfulness or untruthfulness, be asked on cross examination of the witness (1) concerning the witness' character for truthfulness or untruthfulness, or (2) concerning the character for truthfulness or untruthfulness of another witness as to which character the witness being cross examined has testified.

Testimony, whether by an accused or by any other witness, does not operate as a waiver of the accused's or the witness' privilege against self-incrimination with respect to matters related

only to credibility.

Rule 609. Impeachment by Evidence of Conviction of Crime *(This rule applies only to witnesses with prior convictions.)*

(a) **General Rule.** - For the purpose of attacking the credibility of a witness, evidence that a witness other than the accused has been convicted of a crime shall be admitted if elicited from the witness or established by public record during cross-examination, but only if the crime was punishable by death or imprisonment in excess of one year, and the Court determines that the probative value of admitting this evidence outweighs its prejudicial effect to the accused. Evidence that any witness has been convicted of a crime shall be admitted if it involved dishonesty or false statement, regardless of the punishment.

(b) **Time Limit.** - Evidence of a conviction under this Rule is not admissible if a period of more than ten years has elapsed since the date of the conviction or of the release of the witness from the confinement imposed for that conviction, whichever is the later date, unless the Court determines that the value of the conviction substantially outweighs its prejudicial effect. However, evidence of a conviction more than 10 years old as calculated herein, is not admissible unless the proponent gives to the adverse party sufficient advance written notice of intent to use such evidence to provide the adverse party with a fair opportunity to contest the use of such evidence.

(c) **Effect of pardon, annulment, or certificate or rehabilitation.** - Evidence of a conviction is not admissible if (1) the conviction has been the subject of a pardon or other equivalent procedure based on a finding of the rehabilitation of the person convicted of a subsequent crime which was punishable by death or imprisonment in excess of one year, or (2) the conviction has been the subject of a pardon, other equivalent procedure based on a finding of innocence.

(d) **Juvenile adjudication.** Evidence of juvenile adjudication is generally not admissible under this rule. The court may, however, in a criminal case allow evidence of a juvenile adjudication of a witness other than the accused if conviction of the offense would be admissible to attack the credibility of an adult and the court is satisfied that admission in evidence is necessary for a fair determination of the issue of guilt or innocence.

(e) **Not Applicable**

Rule 610. Religious Beliefs or Opinions

Evidence of the beliefs or opinions of a witness on matters of religion is not admissible for the purpose of showing that by reason of their nature the witness' credibility is impaired or enhanced.

Rule 611. Mode and Order of Interrogation and Presentation

(a) **Control by Court.** - The Court shall exercise reasonable control over questioning of witnesses and presenting evidence so as to:

1. make the questioning and presentation effective for ascertaining the truth,
2. avoid needless use of time, and

3. protect witnesses from harassment or undue embarrassment.

(b) Scope of cross examination. - *The scope of the cross examination shall not be limited to the scope of the direct examination, but may inquire into any relevant facts or matters contained in the witness' statement, including all reasonable inferences that can be drawn from those facts and matters, and may inquire into any omissions from the witness statement that are otherwise material and admissible.*

(c) Leading questions. - Leading questions should not be used on direct examination of a witness (except as may be necessary to develop the witness' testimony). Ordinarily, leading questions are permitted on cross-examination. When a party calls a hostile witness, an adverse party, or a witness identified with an adverse party, leading questions may be used.

(d) Redirect/Re-cross. - *After cross examination, additional questions may be asked by the direct examining attorney, but questions must be limited to matters raised by the attorney on cross examination. Likewise, additional questions may be asked by the cross examining attorney or re-cross, but such questions must be limited to matters raised on redirect examination and should avoid repetition.*

Rule 612. Writing Used to Refresh Memory

If a written statement is used to refresh the memory of a witness either while testifying or before testifying, the Court shall determine that the adverse party is entitled to have the writing produced for inspection. The adverse party may cross examine the witness on the material and introduce into evidence those portions, which relate to the testimony of the witness.

Rule 613. Prior Statements of Witnesses

Examining witness concerning prior statement. In examining a witness concerning a prior statement made by the witness, whether written or not, the statement need not be shown nor its contents disclosed to the witness at that time, but on request the same shall be shown or disclosed to opposing counsel.

Extrinsic evidence of prior inconsistent statement of witness. Extrinsic evidence of a prior inconsistent statement by a witness is not admissible unless the witness is afforded an opportunity to explain or deny the same and the opposite party is afforded an opportunity to interrogate.

ARTICLE VII. OPINIONS AND EXPERT TESTIMONY

Rule 701. Opinion Testimony by Lay Witness

If the witness is not testifying as an expert, the witness' testimony in the form of opinions or inferences is limited to those opinions or inferences which are (a) rationally based on the perception of the witness and (b) helpful to a clear understanding of the witness' testimony or the determination of a fact in issue.

Rule 702. Testimony by Experts

If scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge will assist the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue, a witness qualified as an expert by

knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education, may testify in the form of an opinion or otherwise.

Rule 703. Bases of Opinion Testimony by Experts

The facts or data upon which an expert bases an opinion may be those perceived by or made known to the expert at or before the hearing. If of a type reasonably relied upon by experts in the field in forming opinions or inferences, the facts or data need not be admissible in evidence.

Rule 704. Opinion on Ultimate Issue

- (a) Opinion or inference testimony otherwise admissible is not objectionable because it embraces an issue to be decided by the trier of fact.
- (b) *In a criminal case, an expert witness shall not express an opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the accused.*

Rule 705. Disclosure of Facts or Data Underlying Expert Opinion

The expert may testify in terms of opinion or inference and give reasons therefor without prior disclosure of the underlying facts or data, unless the Court requires otherwise. The expert may in any event be required to disclose the underlying facts or data on cross examination.

ARTICLE VIII. HEARSAY

Rule 801. Definitions

The following definitions apply under this article:

- (a) Statement. - A “statement” is an oral or written assertion or nonverbal conduct of a person, if it is intended by the person as an assertion.
- (b) Declarant. - A “declarant” is a person who makes a statement.
- (c) Hearsay. – “Hearsay” is a statement, other than one made by the declarant while testifying at the trial or hearing, offered in evidence to prove the truth of the matter asserted.
- (d) Statements which are not hearsay. - A statement is not hearsay if:
 - (1) Prior statement by witness. - The declarant testifies at the trial or hearing and is subject to cross examination concerning the statement and the statement is (A) inconsistent with the declarant’s testimony, and was given under oath subject to the penalty of perjury at a trial, hearing, or other proceeding, or in a deposition, or (B) consistent with the declarant’s testimony and is offered to rebut an express or implied charge against the declarant of recent fabrication or improper influence or motive, or (C) one of identification of a person made after perceiving the person; or

- (2) Admission by a party-opponent. - The statement is offered against a party and is (A) the party's own statement in either an individual or a representative capacity of (B) a statement of which the party has manifested an adoption or belief in its truth, or (C) a statement by a person authorized by the party to make a statement concerning the subject, or (D) a statement by the party's agent or servant concerning a matter within the scope of the agency or employment, made during the existence of relationship, or (E) a statement by a co-conspirator of a party during the course in furtherance of the conspiracy.

Rule 802. Hearsay Rule

Hearsay is not admissible, except as provided by these rules.

Rule 803. Hearsay Exceptions, Availability of Declarant Immaterial

The following are not excluded by the hearsay rule, even though the declarant is available as a witness:

(1) Present sense impression. - A statement describing or explaining an event or condition made while the declarant was perceiving the event or condition, or immediately thereafter.

(2) Excited utterance. - A statement relating to a startling event or condition made while the declarant was under the stress of excitement caused by the event or condition.

(3) Then existing mental, emotional, or physical conditions. - A statement of the declarant's then existing state of mind, emotion, sensation, or physical condition (such as intent, plan, motive, design, mental feeling, pain, and bodily health), but not including a statement of memory or belief to prove the fact remembered or believed unless it relates to the execution, revocation, identification, or terms of declarant's will.

(4) Statements for purposes of medical diagnosis or treatment. - Statements made for the purpose of medical diagnosis or treatment.

(5) Recorded Recollection. - A memorandum or record concerning a matter about which a witness once had knowledge but now has insufficient recollection to enable the witness to testify fully and accurately, shown to have been made or adopted by the witness when the matter was fresh in the witness' memory and to reflect that knowledge correctly.

(6) Records of regularly conducted activity. - A memorandum, report, record, or data compilation, in any form, of acts, events, conditions, opinions, or diagnoses, made at or near the time by, or from information transmitted by, a person with knowledge, if kept in the course of a regularly conducted business activity, and if it was the regular practice of that business activity to make the memorandum, report, record, or data compilation, all as shown by the testimony of the custodian or other qualified witness, unless the source of information or the method or circumstances of preparation indicate lack of trustworthiness. The term "business" as used in this paragraph includes business, institution, association, profession, occupation, and calling of every kind, whether or not conducted for profit.

(18) Learned treatises. - To the extent called to the attention of an expert witness upon

cross examination or relied upon by the expert witness in direct examination, statements contained in published treatises, periodicals, or pamphlets on a subject of history, medicine, or other science or art, established as a reliable authority by the testimony or admission of the witness or by other expert testimony or by judicial notice.

(21) Reputation as to character. - Reputation of a person's character among associates or in the community.

(22) Judgment of previous conviction. - Evidence of a judgment finding a person guilty of a crime punishable by death or imprisonment in excess of one year, to prove any fact essential to sustain the judgment, but not including, when offered by the Government in a criminal Plaintiff for purposes other than impeachment, judgments against persons other than the accused.

Rule 804. Hearsay Exceptions, Declarant Unavailable

(a) **Definition of unavailability.** "Unavailability as a witness" includes situations in which the declarant -

- (1) is exempted by ruling of the court on the ground of privilege from testifying concerning the subject matter of the declarant's statement; or
- (2) persists in refusing to testify concerning the subject matter of the declarant's statement despite an order of the court to do so; or
- (3) testifies to a lack of memory of the subject matter of the declarant's statement; or
- (4) is unable to be present or to testify at the hearing because of death or then existing physical or mental illness or infirmity; or
- (5) is absent from the hearing and the proponent of a statement has been unable to procure the declarant's attendance (or in the case of a hearsay exception under subdivision (b)(2), (3), or (4), the declarant's attendance or testimony) by process or other reasonable means.

A Declarant is not unavailable as a witness if exemption, refusal, claim of lack of memory, inability, or absence is due to the procurement or wrongdoing of the proponent of a statement for the purpose of preventing the witness from attending or testifying.

(b) **Hearsay exceptions:** The following are not excluded by the hearsay rule if the Declarant is unavailable as a witness:

- (1) Former testimony. Testimony given as a witness at another hearing of the same or a different proceeding, or in a deposition taken in compliance with law in the course of the same or another proceeding, if the party against whom the testimony is now offered or, in a civil action or proceeding, a predecessor in interest, had an opportunity and similar motive to develop the testimony by direct, cross, or redirect examination.
- (2) Statement under belief or impending death. In a prosecution for homicide or in a civil action or proceeding, a statement made by a Declarant while believing that the declarant's death was imminent, concerning the cause or circumstances of what the Declarant believed to be impending death.

- (3) Statement against interest. A statement which was at the time of its making so far contrary to the declarant's pecuniary or proprietary interest, or so far tended to subject the Declarant to civil or criminal liability, or to render invalid a claim by the Declarant against another, that a reasonable person in the declarant's position would not have made the statement unless believing it to be true. A statement tending to expose the Declarant to criminal liability and offered to exculpate the accused is not admissible unless corroborating circumstances clearly indicate the trustworthiness of the statement.
- (4) Statement of personal or family history. (A) A statement concerning the declarant's own birth, adoption, marriage, divorce, legitimacy, relationship by blood, adoption, or marriage, ancestry, or other similar fact of personal or family history, even though Declarant had no means of acquiring personal knowledge of the matter stated; (B) a statement concerning the foregoing matters, and death also, of another person, if the declarant was related to the other by blood, adoption, or marriage or was so intimately associated with the other's family as likely to have accurate information concerning the matter declared.
- (5) Forfeiture by wrongdoing. A statement offered against a party that has engaged or acquiesced in wrongdoing that was intended to, and did, procure the unavailability of the declarant as a witness.

Rule 805. Hearsay within Hearsay

Hearsay included within hearsay is not excluded under the hearsay rule if each part of the combined statement conforms with an exception to the hearsay rule provided in these rules.

ARTICLE IX. AUTHENTICATION AND IDENTIFICATION – Not Applicable

ARTICLE X. CONTENTS OF WRITING, RECORDINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS – Not Applicable

ARTICLE XI. OTHER

Rule 1103. Title

These rules may be known and cited as the National High School Mock Trial Federal Rules of Evidence.

Host states have the discretion to eliminate rules that do not pertain to the trial at hand.