



# Rhode Island Mock Trial Tournament

THE RI MOCK TRIAL TOURNAMENT IS A PRODUCTION OF RHODE ISLAND LEGAL/EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

## STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ABOUT MOCK TRIAL PROCEDURES

1. Have students brainstorm the order of events in a mock trial and list them on one side of the blackboard. On the other side of the board, list the steps in a mock trial as they actually occur, noting any errors or omissions in the students' list as you do so.
2. Once the whole trial process has been introduced, have students make a list or brainstorm and write on the board the steps in a trial, first from the plaintiff/prosecution's point of view, (e.g., opening statement, direct examination of P/P's witnesses, cross-examination of defense witnesses and closing arguments). Do the same from the defense perspective.
3. Have students check newspapers and magazines for articles that mention a trial that is currently being conducted. Paste the articles to a large sheet of paper with the trial step that is mentioned in the article written in large letters at the top of the sheet. Have students post these around the classroom in their proper order.
4. Have students become familiar with the steps in a trial, the physical layout of a courtroom and the participants in a trial.
5. A courtroom visit is a good idea at this point (or after the group has begun working on the trial). Hold a debriefing session during the class period following the visit and/or have students write: What part(s) of the trial did you observe? What happened before the part(s) you observed? What happened in the trial after your left? List these on the board with the step of the trial that your group observed in the middle, and the "before" and "after" lists on either side.
6. Students should be instructed to watch a television program or see a movie having to do with a trial. Then they can discuss what the case was about, what parts of the trial they observed and whether the depiction of the trial procedure was accurate and realistic.
7. Invite a trial attorney or judge to the class to review basic trial procedure and describe different types of litigation, such as arbitration hearings, worker's compensation hearings, school board hearings and juvenile proceedings. Have the students discuss how and why do they differ from the basic civil and criminal trial procedure.
8. After general trial procedure has been covered in class, distribute the mock trial materials that you plan to use and have the students read them thoroughly. At this point you can either assign the roles of the various trial participants or wait until you have covered the rules of evidence. (This also helps ensure that students will read all of the trial materials, instead of just reading those for their parts or sides of the case.)