



December 28, 2020

***Re: Ten Tips for Trial by Zoom***

Dear Students and Coaches,

Congratulations in competing in the first virtual National Trial Competition!

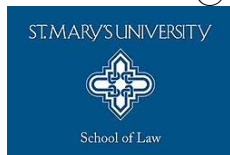
We are thrilled and honored to be partnering with the Texas Young Lawyers Association and American College of Trial Lawyers as they host the 2021 National Trial Competition. Between the two of us, we have hosted or co-hosted 498 scored Zoom rounds since the pandemic began. TYLA and ACTL asked us to share what we've learned.

We've created Ten Tips for Trial by Zoom (on the next page). This is based on our observations from running online tournaments, our experience as coaches, and great suggestions we've seen from others (especially Baylor Law School and the American Mock Trial Association). We hope you find this helpful.

Like you, we wish the competitions could be in person. But in the meantime, we are grateful that trial competitions are still possible. We've found online competitions to be educational, valuable, and fun. They also come with some silver linings: this year's NTC regional case has audio and video exhibits that would have been difficult to use if we were in person.

We wish you a happy 2021 and good luck at your regional competitions!

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### **TEN TIPS FOR TRIAL BY ZOOM**

1. **Maximize the strength and stability of your Internet connection.** We're listing it first because it's the most important thing you can do to have a successful online trial experience. A wired connection is more stable than a wi-fi connection, so try to connect to a hardwired network or directly into your router. If your computer doesn't have an ethernet port, you can buy a USB-to-ethernet adapter for less than \$25. And if wi-fi is the only option, keep your computer as close as possible to the router and turn off or disconnect other devices that may be relying on your internet.
2. **Prepare for the worst.** Your phone or tablet is a good backup if your computer connection fails. Download the Zoom app ahead of time and have a printed copy of the Zoom link handy.
3. **Remember your computer charger.** This may sound obvious, but in the competitions we've run the number one source of technical failure has been participants forgetting their computer adapter (or forgetting to use it).
4. **Dress professionally.** In this respect, treat the zoom courtroom like a real courtroom. (Dress professionally from the waist down, too – you never know when you might have to stand unexpectedly.)
5. **Make sure you're easily visible.** You should be lit from the front so judges can see you. Similarly, if there is too much light behind you, it will be harder for judges to see you. Practice under similar circumstances and time frames and record yourself so you can see what the judges see.
6. **Advocate comfortably.** NTC rules permit advocates to sit or stand while competing on Zoom. In online competitions conducted so far, teams have had success with both approaches. Choose whatever is most comfortable for you.
7. **Choose a clean space.** You don't need to compete in a conference room or your law school's courtroom. But try to choose a space without anything distracting on screen. And remember that NTC rules prohibit anything that identifies your school.
8. **Practice with your tech.** If you decide to use an external camera or microphone, make sure you are well versed in how to use it before trial starts. Practice screen sharing exhibits. Get comfortable with everything you will need to do once trial begins.
9. **Read and re-read the rules.** The NTC rules have been updated for the Zoom format. Make sure you know them well – and follow them closely.
10. **Stay calm.** Chances are something will go wrong in one of your trials. Your teammate's Internet might fail while you are expecting them to screen share exhibits. Your microphone might stop working during your closing. Relax, stay calm, and fix the situation as best you can. Everyone knows this is hard, and in our experience, judges are patient and understanding when it comes to tech issues.