Courtroom Journalism Contest Official Rules

- Each Orange County Mock Trial team may enroll up to three courtroom journalists.
- Students entering the Courtroom Journalism Contest must complete the online Mock Trial student registration form available on CRF-OC's website at: https://www.crfoc.org/artandjournalism/ no later than **October 9, 2026** in order to be eligible to participate.
- The Courtroom Journalism Contest will be held during the first 4 rounds of the Mock Trial competition.
- Before the competition, contestants must check-in at the Central Justice Center.
- During the trials, all contestants must sit in the jury box in the row below the scorekeepers. If there is not room in the jury box, or the presiding judge asks the contestant not to sit in the jury box, a contestant may sit in the front row of spectator seating, away from the witnesses. Once contestants are in the jury box, they may not have any contact with anyone from their respective schools.
- Contestants should write the article as if they were a journalist observing a real trial (not the Mock Trial competition). Articles should be as objective as possible. Interviews are not allowed. Any quotations must come directly from what was said in the courtroom during the competition. The article must be based on what the journalist witnessed at the designated official round and cannot be written prior to the trial. The journalist may only report on their own team's trial. The journalist must draft their article completely independently. The article must be in the voice of the journalist covering the trial. Contestants may not use cellphones for any reason while in the courtroom. For more guidance, please see the judging criteria available here: https://bit.ly/3C9bIBX
- Contestants will have 24 hours to complete their articles and send them to CRF-OC. **All entries must be received by CRF-OC** via e-mail (mrieth@crfoc.org).
- **Submissions must be typed, titled, and must not exceed 850 words. Article must be in a 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins. Your name and school must be on the front of the submission.**
- Awards for the Courtroom Journalism Contest are independent of the Orange County Mock Trial Competition; an individual may win a Courtroom Journalism Contest award regardless of the Mock Trial team's final ranking.
- Award winners will be notified in March. Winners of the Orange County Courtroom Journalism Contest are eligible to compete in the statewide competition in March. For more information on the state competition, visit: https://teachdemocracy.org/programs/mock-trial-california/journalist-contest-finals

Questions? Contact CRF-OC Assistant Program Manager at mrieth@crfoc.org or call 949.679.0730 x109

CRF-OC reserves the right to exhibit submitted contest entries, without compensation, in various formats and at various venues for the purposes of CRF-OC promotions.