

## 2016-16 WUMT Tryout Packet

Thank you for trying out for the 2016-2017 Washington University Mock Trial team. Mock trial provides a unique opportunity for students interested in law, theatre, debate, public speaking, and fun! The following pages provide the answers to some commonly asked questions and step-by-step instructions for trying out.

If you have questions at any point during this process please do not hesitate to contact Vice President for Recruitment, Pilar Gonzalez, at [pilar.gonzalez@washumocktrial.org](mailto:pilar.gonzalez@washumocktrial.org) or Coaches James Boyce at [james.boyce@washumocktrial.org](mailto:james.boyce@washumocktrial.org) or Laura Zimmermann at [laura.zimmermann@washumocktrial.org](mailto:laura.zimmermann@washumocktrial.org) – we are happy to help! Thank you again for your interest in Washington University Mock Trial; have fun and good luck!

The team will be announced via e-mail and on <http://www.mocktrial.wustl.edu> before midnight on Saturday, September 10th. Our first meeting will be on Sunday, September 11th. We'll let you know where we're meeting.

Tryout Checklist – if you can check them all, you're ready to go!

- Schedule a tryout time at the info session
- Prepare your witness character and direct examination answers
- Prepare your speech
- Complete the 2016-2017 WUMT Application on [mocktrial.wustl.edu](http://mocktrial.wustl.edu) before 11PM the day before your scheduled tryout. (It's located on the "Join Us!" page)
- Arrive 10-15 minutes before your scheduled time so you can practice your direct examination with a current team member.
- You will perform your witness part first and your speech second.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is Mock Trial?**

Mock Trial is an academic competition. More than 700 teams from over 300 colleges and universities compete in invitational, regional, and national competition every year. A mock trial team includes three student lawyers and three student witnesses. During a mock trial, two teams (one portraying the plaintiff and one portraying the defense) compete in front of a panel of judges or jurors. During competition, students present opening statements, examine witnesses, portray witnesses, object to improper testimony, and make closing arguments. The exciting thing about mock trial at Washington University is students are given the opportunity to act as both attorneys and witnesses for both sides of the case during the course of a year.

### **Do I need to be “Pre-Law” to excel at Mock Trial?**

Absolutely not! Historically, some of our most successful competitors had absolutely no interest in law school – they just loved the activity! Of course, students interested in law are encouraged to try out, but so are students interested in public speaking, debate, and theater (remember those witnesses we mentioned). Witnesses are an incredibly important component of the mock trial team – the more entertaining they are, the better! We are looking for students of all years and interests.

### **How many students are on the Washington University Mock Trial team?**

This varies from year to year, but we generally field two or three “teams” of 6-10 people. There are generally around 20 students in the Washington University mock trial program in any given year.

### **What is the time commitment for Mock Trial?**

Mock trial is a large time commitment. Students are expected to attend the team’s regular practices usually held Wednesday from 6:30-9:30 PM and Sunday from 2:00-5:00 PM. In addition to regularly scheduled practices, we sometimes have additional practices focusing on more specific skills or aspects of our performance. Students can expect to travel for competition anywhere between one and five weekends a semester.

**Where do you compete?**

Mock Trial competitions take place all over the country. In the past, mock trial competitions have taken us to Washington, DC, Memphis, Orlando, Los Angeles, and New York City just to name a few places.

**Can I do Mock Trial if I am thinking about being Pre-Med/joining a club/ playing a sport?**

Sure! Our team members are all incredibly involved on campus (we've had RAs, TAs, WUSAs, Researchers, Thesis Writers, Members of Greek Organizations, students with part-time jobs, etc.). While mock trial is a time commitment, it does not (and should not) need to be your only commitment!

**Can I wait until second semester to join the team?**

Unfortunately, because of the nature of the mock trial competitions and preparation, we cannot accept applications for the team after fall tryouts.

**What do you wear during competition? What should I wear to my tryout?**

Mock Trial competitions require students wear professional business attire (suits for both males and females). Students playing witnesses will often wear a costume consistent with their character (of course, these costumes should also be professional). If you own a suit, please wear it for your tryout. Males without suits should wear a shirt and tie with a nice pair of dress pants. Ladies who do not have suits should wear a professional top with a professional skirt or dress pants.

**Can I do Mock Trial if I have no previous experience with Mock Trial?**

Absolutely. While some students join us with years of high school experience in mock trial, many come to us with no experience at all. Previous mock trial experience is not a prerequisite; in fact, many of our most successful competitors came to WUMT without any previous experience. Don't worry, we will teach you everything you need to know!

## **The Tryout Process**

Your tryout will have three portions: a witness characterization, a prepared speech, and an impromptu speech. Specific instructions are below. If you have any questions, feel free to contact anyone listed above.

### ***Part I: Witness***

Some of the most important (if not the most important) people in mock trial are the witnesses. Attorneys can argue the law, but witnesses provide the true personal stories that make a case compelling; witnesses bring mock trial to life. The best and highest scoring mock trial witnesses are entertaining; sometimes they are funny, sometimes they are quirky, sometimes they have an accent. They are always credible and memorable. This portion of your tryout is your opportunity to show us those acting skills! Make us laugh, make us cry, or just take us on a journey. Be as creative as you like, but keep our attention!

What you need to do: Read the affidavit of E.J. Graham (attached to this packet), develop a character to bring that individual to life, and write out answers that character would give to the questions. There is no “right” way to play any of these characters—a “serious” characterization is just as good as a funny one. E.J. may be an 80-year-old retiree, a Scottish immigrant, a Southern belle (or beaux), an out-of-work Wall Street Banker, a college student—the possibilities are literally endless! But, if you have any dialect, acting, or improv comedy experience, this is a great time to show it off! This character can be played in any number of ways—find a characterization that shows off your strengths.

Once you’ve decided on a characterization, look at the attached direct examination. For your tryout, a returning member of WUMT will ask you these questions for your witness, and you’ll have the opportunity to perform as your witness while answering these questions. You’ll have the opportunity to meet with the member of WUMT before your tryout to run through the direct examination before you perform it for us. The purpose of a direct examination is to allow your witness to tell his or her story, so develop answers that are engaging, memorable, and credible.

The answers provided on the attached direct examination are simply the main points for each answer. The characterization you choose will “fill out” the answer. So, if this was the question and answer listed on the sheet

Q: What is your occupation? A: Own a bar.

Here are some examples of answers one might give:

A: I own and operate the finest rathskeller in Midlands. That's a licensed, alcohol-serving food and drink establishment, or - as our less sophisticated competitors would call it - a bar. Mine's called Chuggies.

A: I own a bar. A good bar. It's called Chuggies. Right here in Midlands. It's been in my family for three generations. I worked there when I was going through college. Then, after my dad died, I took it over. When I retire in a couple of years, my daughter, Suzi, will take it over. It's a real family business.

A: I am the owner of Chuggie's Sports Bar. It's the perfect job for someone who likes sports and alcohol, and the pay's not half bad. But when my parents ask, I tell them I'm an accountant. You know, keeping up appearances and all that.

What are we looking for? We're looking for people who can develop engaging characterizations that are different than your regular persona, interesting, credible, and memorable. We're looking for people who can maintain this characterization through the entire direct examination and who can hold our attention throughout the entire examination.

### ***Part II: Prepared Speech***

What you need to do: Prepare a short (3-4 minute) persuasive speech. You can argue absolutely anything you'd like, provided that you pick a side and defend it. The topics you can choose are literally endless; they can range from the political to the fictional to the mundane. Be as creative as you'd like in the selection of your topic. Here are some examples of topics you might consider (but please feel free to choose your own topic):

- Why a prospective student should choose Washington University for their undergraduate education.
- Why \_\_\_\_\_ will win the World Series/Super Bowl/NCAA Tournament/ etc.
- Why \_\_\_\_\_ is the best flavor of ice cream.
- Prosecute (or defend) a famous literary or fairy tale character.
- Why speed limits should be abolished.
- Why voting should be mandatory.
- Why \_\_\_\_\_ is the best book ever written.

If you can answer each of these questions confidently, you are halfway to a great audition. The other half is you standing on your feet practicing. Remember, there are no wrong answers with this part of your tryout. Additionally, if your topic has some “legal” component, know that we are **not** making team decisions based on your knowledge of the law. We want to see how well you are able to present yourself in front of others and how well you can distill four separate versions of the same event into a clear and coherent story.

What are we looking for? This is an opportunity to showcase your public speaking ability; we want to find people who can speak at the appropriate pace, at the appropriate volume, with the proper inflection, and use appropriate gestures and facial expressions. Additionally, we’re looking for people who are calm and confident public speakers. We want people who are able to capture and hold our attention while speaking in a way that is easy to understand.

### ***Part III: Extemporaneous Speaking***

What you need to do: Nothing! At the tryout, we’ll give you a topic, give you 30 seconds to think about it, and listen as you talk to us about it for about a minute. Don’t worry, the topic will be something you know plenty about; we want this part of the tryout to be as pain-free as possible.

What are we looking for? We’re looking for people who can appear relaxed and self-assured while thinking on their feet. The most successful mock trial competitors are those people who can adapt quickly and confidently to what is happening to them in the courtroom, and we’re looking for people who can communicate effectively and clearly while under pressure. Again, don’t worry! We know this part of your tryout will be unrehearsed (in fact, that’s the point!); we expect this part of your tryout to be fun, and we hope you will, too.

## **Affidavit of E.J. Graham**

My name is E.J. Graham. I live at 801D Harper Lane in Midlands City, Midlands with Kevin and Mike. After I graduated from college, I couldn't get hired in any job that matched my major, so I started working at the family business. And I'm still there. I thought that I would really dislike the work, but I've grown to really enjoy it. Doing what we do is really rewarding, and I'm glad to be a part of it.

I got a letter in the mail saying that I had to come to court to talk about what I saw when I was taking out the trash on June 20, 2012 after I got back from Le Poisson Bleu, a restaurant in Midlands Center where I met Nicolas Dumas for dinner. I took a cab home after dinner because my car was in the shop. Before I had left for dinner, I put my trash in the hallway. But, when I got back, my landlord, Abigail Kertzman, had put a note on it saying I was supposed to take the trash all the way to the dumpster or she was going to raise my rent. Can you believe that? I pay rent and she won't even take out my trash!

Anyway, I put on my shoes and go down two flights of steps, out the front door, and see that my cab driver was waiting in front of the building. He must have been waiting for his next call. I get halfway around the building, and it starts pouring. It was like a million buckets of water were suddenly pouring down from the sky. It went from drizzle to downpour in two seconds flat! I was just walking over to the dumpster and thinking about how gross the lid probably is (I sincerely doubt that my landlord cleans it) when I see headlights coming down the alley. I jump out of the way, and this white Chevy Impala roars past me, blasting Maroon 5. I happened to catch its license plate: NED4SPD.

I tried to see who was driving the car, but I couldn't see the driver. The car had tinted windows, and those dark windows, with the darkness and the rain, made it really hard for me to see into the car. There was hardly any light passing through the windows at all! It was really just hard to see anything. There aren't any streetlights near my building, and it was so cloudy that you couldn't see the moon or any stars. It was really foggy, too. Walking around my building was like looking at a black sheet of paper! A change in the weather changed everything that night!

The car seemed like it was going really fast, especially considering the weather. My dumpster is on a side street (Graham Road), and there's a yield sign at the end of our block where that street meets Harper Lane. That yield sign is just so important because it tells drivers to pay attention. If they don't there will be an

accident (and I've seen lots of those) because the traffic on Harper Lane doesn't stop!

Well, neither did that Chevy Impala. After it blew past me, it just ran through the yield sign (maybe it slowed down a little... I'm not really sure). Right before that happened, my taxi driver must have gotten a call because the taxi cab was driving through the intersection at the same time the Impala went through the intersection. It all happened so fast... the car ran through the intersection, and then the two cars just collided. The cab driver... I didn't know his name; I just remember he was tall and thin with long brown hair. I think he was Irish, but I'm not sure. He kept trying to talk to me when he was driving me back to my apartment, but his accent was so hard to understand that I pretended I was asleep in the back seat. The cab was a Prius, but I'm not sure what color. Maybe forest green?

After the crash, I didn't go and help. I faint at the sight of blood, so I figured the best thing that I could do was to call the police. I pulled out my cell phone 911 and told them that a crazy driver had just driven through a yield sign and hit a taxi driver! But, before I could even hang up the phone, Officer Nelson from the Midlands Center Police Department was on the scene.

### **Direct Examination of E.J. Graham**

Q: Please introduce yourself to the court. A: E.J. Graham

Q: What do you do for a living? A: I work in the family business

Q: Why are you here today?

A: Supposed to talk about what I saw on June 20, 2012. Saw a car accident.

Q: What were you doing that day?

A: Had just met someone for dinner. Taking out the trash.

Q: Did you have a clear view of the alley? A: Kind of. It was dark and rainy.

Q: What did you see? A: Saw a car.

Q: What happened next? A: Car ran through yield sign. Hit the taxi cab.

Q: What did you do? A: Didn't go to help. Called 911.