



The Young Lawyers
Division of the
Virginia Bar
Association

Model Judiciary Program



Appeal Arguments

Appropriate Dress:

- Coat and tie for young men (preferably a suit).
- Professional dress for young women (preferably a suit).

Be Respectful of the Court:

- To begin argument address the court, "May it please the Court, my name is _____, and I will be arguing on behalf of the appellant/appellee..."
- Appellants must indicate at the beginning of their argument whether they wish to reserve time for rebuttal and how much time.
- When an Appeals Judge or Supreme Court Justice interrupts your argument to ask a question, stop speaking immediately, listen to the question carefully, and respond to the best of your knowledge.
- Address the court respectfully, "Yes, Mr. Chief Justice (to Chief Justice Hassell...Yes/No, your honor (to other Justices or Appeals Judges)."

Preparation:

- Organization is everything. With the time limitations and the likelihood that some of your time will be spent fielding questions, a well-organized argument is essential. Establish your main points early and in a logical progression.
- Do not use notes! Commit your argument and the facts of the case to memory. If you are relying on notes or reading a prepared speech, you are not prepared! Notes can be a distraction for you and the judges. They also restrict good eye contact, which is vital.
- Speak distinctly, neither murmur nor shout, in an even voice.
- Use only limited hand gestures, too many are distracting.