

# Tips for a Direct Examination in a Mock Trial

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Unlike a cross examination which is hard to plan, a direct examination is all about planning. Here are a few suggestions to help your mock trial direct examination go smoothly.

## 1. Make Sure Your Witness is Prepared

A witness needs to know his or her mock trial witness statement inside and out. When you rehearse, quiz them on all the facts in their witness statement to make sure they know their witness statement. This will help them on [cross-examination](#) too. Also, see our post on [tips for witnesses](#).

## 2. Don't Attempt to Script the Direct Examination

While it is proper to prepare a list of questions or make an outline, you don't want to entirely script the direct examination. A cross examination that is totally scripted will sound artificial, and will lead your witness to be thrown off when there are objections, or if you have to rephrase the question.

## 3. Prepare for the "Leading Question" Objection

The "leading question" objection is the most important objection to know for a mock trial direct examination. See our earlier post on [leading questions](#). Practice rephrasing your questions in a less leading manner. For example, instead of asking "Did the defendant point a gun at you?", you can ask "Was there anything in the defendant's hand?" and when the witness responds "Yes, a gun", you can ask them "In what direction did the defendant point the gun."

## 4. Coordinate with the Attorney that is Doing the Closing Argument

It is important that you discuss your direct examination with your classmate that is doing the closing argument. You need to elicit or establish certain facts that he or she wants to use during their closing argument.

## 5. Lay the Foundation for Your Questions

If you have an expert witness, you will need to establish his or her qualifications before they can render an opinion. Likewise with fact witnesses you may need to explain how they know the information on the subject they wish to testify.

## 6. Prepare to Respond to Objections

The best way to prepare to respond to objections is to rehearse your mock trial and have a classmate make objections during your direct examination. There are two types of objections that you will face during your mock trial direct examination. There may be objections to the form of your question, and even if a question is proper, you may face objections on the response that your witness makes.

## 7. Study Examples of Direct Examinations

When I was in law school, I didn't have the internet as a resource to look at other trials. Today, mock trial competitors have lots of examples online for direct examination. See [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).