

The Opening Statement event challenges participants to review a criminal case and articulate a compelling opening statement. Competitors will assume the role of either the Prosecuting or Defense Attorney in a simulated courtroom.

Entry Requirements

- Competitors in this event compete individually, not as a team.
- Chapters can only register 3 individuals to compete.

Materials

Competitors can/should provide the following materials. Competitors are only permitted to bring in the below materials to the competition. TPSA does not provide the below materials.

Competitor Provided Materials

- **Photo Identification:** Reference the rulebook (<https://tpsa.info/rulebook>) for details
- **3" x 5" notecard:** Notes taken during prep (prior to competition). Both sides of the note card can be utilized, not to extend past card edge. Additional writing space cannot be added to card.

Supplemental Documents

- [2026 Regional Scenario](#)

Procedures and Timeline

- **Prior to Competition:** The regional case will be released at least one (1) month prior to the start of regional competition and the state case will be made available the day following the conclusion of the last regional conference.- Case documents will be released at once for all regions.
 1. Review the criminal case prior to competition.
 2. Prepare an opening statement as either the Prosecuting Attorney or the Defense Attorney.
 3. Make notes on a single, unaltered, 3" x 5" notecard. Both sides of the notecard can be utilized. This notecard is the only item that may be brought in to the competition.
- **Check In (10 min Time Limit):** Competitors must check in to their event at their designated **check-in time** . Competitors that arrive **ten (10) minutes** after their designated check-in time will be marked as no-shows and not be allowed to compete out of respect for the time commitment made by our Judges and Volunteers.
- **Pre-Event Briefing (5 min Time Limit):** After check-in, Competitors will be guided to the designated event area. Once there, the Moderator will provide a comprehensive briefing, detailing the event's instructions, rules, and procedures. This briefing ensures that each Competitor is well-informed and prepared for the subsequent stages of the competition.
- **Presentation (5 min Time Limit)**
 1. Competitor will be directed to the area where he/she will present the case.
 2. The Moderator will start a five (5) minute timer when directed by the judge.
 3. Competitor will have no more than five (5) minutes to present the case to the Judge(s).
- **Evaluation and Scoring (5 min Time Limit):** After the completion of the event, the Judges will convene to assess each Competitor's performance based on a standardized rubric. This stage is conducted without the presence of the Competitor. Judges will evaluate the criteria outlined in the rubric to ensure a fair and objective scoring process. Once all assessments are finalized, scores will be recorded for each Competitor.

Professional Dress Guidelines

To secure professionalism points, competitors should dress in attire that accurately reflects what professionals in the respective public safety careers would wear while performing the tasks associated with the event. Competitors are also expected to consult and follow the professional dress guidelines in the rulebook to qualify for points. Additionally, participation is contingent upon meeting all prescribed safety protocols.

Judge Qualifications

- Some knowledge of information contained in an opening statement or a knowledge of legal procedures.
- Prior access to the case for review so they know what the case is about.

Criteria	Unattempted	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Proficient	Exemplary	Points
Delivery						
Stage Presence Poise, posture, eye contact, and enthusiasm	0 No attempt was made to use body movement or gestures to enhance the message. No interest or enthusiasm for the topic came through in the presentation.	1 2 The posture, body language, and facial expressions indicated a lack of enthusiasm for the topic. Movements were distracting.	3 4 Stiff or unnatural use of nonverbal behaviors. Body language reflects some discomfort in interacting with the audience—limited use of gestures to reinforce verbal messages. Facial expressions and body language are used to generate enthusiasm but seem somewhat forced.	5 6 Maintained adequate posture and non-distracting movement during the speech. Some gestures were used. Facial expressions and body language sometimes generated an interest and enthusiasm for the topic.	7 Movements & gestures were purposeful, enhanced the speech delivery and did not distract. Body language reflects comfort in interacting with the audience. Facial expressions and body language consistently generated substantial interest and enthusiasm for the topic.	
Voice Pitch, tempo, inflection, quality	0 There is no variety in pitch, tempo, or voice inflection.	1 2 Little variety in pitch, tempo, voice inflection.	3 4 Could be heard most of the time. The competitors attempted to use some variety in vocal quality, but not always successfully. The quality seemed inconsistent at times.	5 6 Spoke loudly and clearly enough to be understood. The competitors varied voice inflection (rate, pitch) volume to enhance the speech. Inflection complemented the verbal message. Pauses were attempted.	7 Voice was clear. The competitors varied rate & volume to enhance the speech. The voice heightened interest and complemented the verbal message. Appropriate pausing was employed.	

Criteria	Unattempted	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Proficient	Exemplary	Points
Diction Pronunciation and Grammar	0 Many distracting errors in pronunciation and/or articulation. Monotone or inappropriate variation of vocal characteristics. Inconsistent with verbal message	1 2 Delivery quality minimal. Regular verbal fillers (ex: "ahs," "uh/ums," or "you-knows") present. Delivery problems cause disruption to message.	3 4 Delivery adequate. Enunciation and pronunciation suitable. Noticeable verbal fillers (ex: "ahs," "uh/ums," or "youknows") present. Tone seemed inconsistent at times.	5 6 Delivery helps to enhance message. Clear enunciation and pronunciation. Minimal vocal fillers (ex: "ahs," "uh/ums," or "youknows"). Tone complemented the verbal message	7 Delivery emphasizes and enhances message. Clear enunciation and pronunciation. No vocal fillers (ex: "ahs," "uh/ums," or "you-knows"). Tone heightened interest and complemented the verbal message.	
Professionalism This criterion evaluates the appropriateness of attire and the level of professional behavior displayed, considering industry standards relevant to the event.	0 No professionalism demonstrated. Attire and behavior are entirely inappropriate or unacceptable.	1 2 Attire is inappropriate for the event and does not meet industry standards. Professional behavior is inconsistent.	3 4 5 Attire is mostly appropriate but may not fully meet industry standards. Professional behavior is generally acceptable.	6 7 8 Attire meets industry standards and is appropriate for the event. Professional behavior is consistent.	9 10 Attire meets industry standards and is appropriate for the event. Professional behavior is outstanding and goes above and beyond expectations. Attire quality is not a factor between Proficient and Exemplary.	
Content						
Logically Organized Structure the opening statement in a clear, sequential manner that effectively presents all required content.	0 Did not make any discernible effort to organize the statement logically.	1 2 Sequencing of ideas was unclear or ineffective, causing confusion.	3 4 Presented ideas with a basic sequence; however, some connections between content might be missing or unclear.	5 6 Displayed a clear sequencing of ideas that mostly incorporated all required content.	7 8 Demonstrated a coherent and logical structure that seamlessly weaved together all required content.	

Criteria	Unattempted	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Proficient	Exemplary	Points
Introduction of Self Properly introduce themselves during an opening statement.	0 Did not make any attempt to introduce self.	1 2 No introduction was provided or there was a vague mention of identity without clarity.	3 4 Clearly introduced self, but lacked additional relevant details.	5 6 Introduced self clearly with some relevant context.	7 Introduced self with clarity and provided a detailed context or background relevant to the case.	
Anticipation of Counterarguments Use foresight and skill in preemptively addressing or countering potential opposing arguments.	0 Did not attempt to anticipate or counter opposing arguments.	1 2 Failed to anticipate or counter obvious opposing arguments.	3 4 Addressed some potential counterarguments but might have missed significant ones.	5 6 Proactively countered most potential opposing arguments with minimal omissions.	7 Expertly anticipated and countered all potential opposing arguments, leaving no gaps.	
Effective Conclusion Craft a compelling, concise, and clear conclusion that encapsulates the primary points of the opening statement.	0 Did not attempt to provide any form of conclusion.	1 2 Conclusion was missing or lacked clear relevance to the main points presented.	3 4 Provided a basic conclusion that summarized some of the main points, but might have lacked a strong closing impact.	5 6 Crafted a clear conclusion that recapped the primary points and added some finality to the statement.	7 Delivered a compelling conclusion that not only summarized key points but also resonated emotionally or rhetorically, leaving a strong impression.	
Fact Presentation Accurately and clearly present the facts supporting their argument.	0 Did not attempt to present relevant facts.	1 2 Presented facts inaccurately or missed key details, causing potential misunderstandings.	3 4 Presented most facts with clarity, but might have missed minor details or lacked depth.	5 6 Provided a thorough presentation of facts with minor errors or omissions.	7 8 Expertly presented all relevant facts with depth, clarity, and precision.	

Criteria	Unattempted	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Proficient	Exemplary	Points
Legal Relevance/References Correctly relate facts to pertinent laws and to reference legal statutes, cases, or principles.	0 Did not attempt to connect facts with relevant laws or provide legal references.	1 2 Failed to relate facts to relevant laws or improper legal references.	3 4 Mostly related facts to relevant laws and provided some accurate legal references.	5 6 Effectively related facts to pertinent laws with mostly accurate references.	7 8 Expertly intertwined facts and law with precise and relevant legal references.	
Use of Evidence Introduces and explains evidence or potential evidence.	0 Did not attempt to introduce or explain relevant evidence.	1 2 Introduced evidence without clarity or relevance, potentially leading to confusion.	3 4 Presented some evidence with a basic level of clarity and relevance.	5 6 Effectively presented and connected evidence to the case with minor areas of improvement.	7 8 Seamlessly introduced and explained evidence with full relevance, clarity, and impact.	
Ethical Considerations Adheres to ethical standards, truthfulness, and avoidance of misrepresentation or exaggeration.	0 Did not exhibit discernible effort towards ethical considerations.	1 2 Displayed clear ethical breaches or made significant misrepresentations.	3 4 Generally adhered to ethical considerations but had minor lapses or potential misrepresentations.	5 6 Maintained ethical standards and was truthful, with minor areas for improvement.	7 8 Exemplified the highest standards of ethics and truthfulness, avoiding all forms of misrepresentation.	
Clarity of Desired Decision Unmistakably express and communicate to the jury the specific decision or outcome they are advocating for.	0 Did not attempt to express a desired decision or outcome to the jury.	1 2 Failed to convey or vaguely hinted at the desired decision, leaving the jury uncertain about the intended outcome.	3 4 Mentioned the desired outcome, but the communication might have lacked emphasis or clarity in certain areas.	5 6 Clearly articulated the desired decision for the jury, with only minor room for improvement in emphasis or clarity.	7 8 Explicitly and persuasively communicated the desired decision, leaving no doubt in the jury's mind about the intended outcome.	

Total Score: _____ / 100 pts