
UMID Moot Court: Oral Argument Basics

2026



Structure of an Appellate Argument

Opening

Roadmap

Main Argument

Conclusion and Prayer for Relief

Rebuttal*

**only if you are arguing for Petitioner*

Opening

Petitioner

“[*Madam/Mr./Honorable*] Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and may it please the Court. May I reserve one minute of my time for rebuttal? My name is [____], and I am arguing this case on behalf of the Petitioner in the matter of [_____]. The issue I will address today is whether [_____].”

Respondent

“[*Madam/Mr./Honorable*] Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and may it please the Court. My name is [____], and I am arguing this case on behalf of the Respondent in the matter of [_____]. The issue I will address today is whether [_____].”

Roadmap

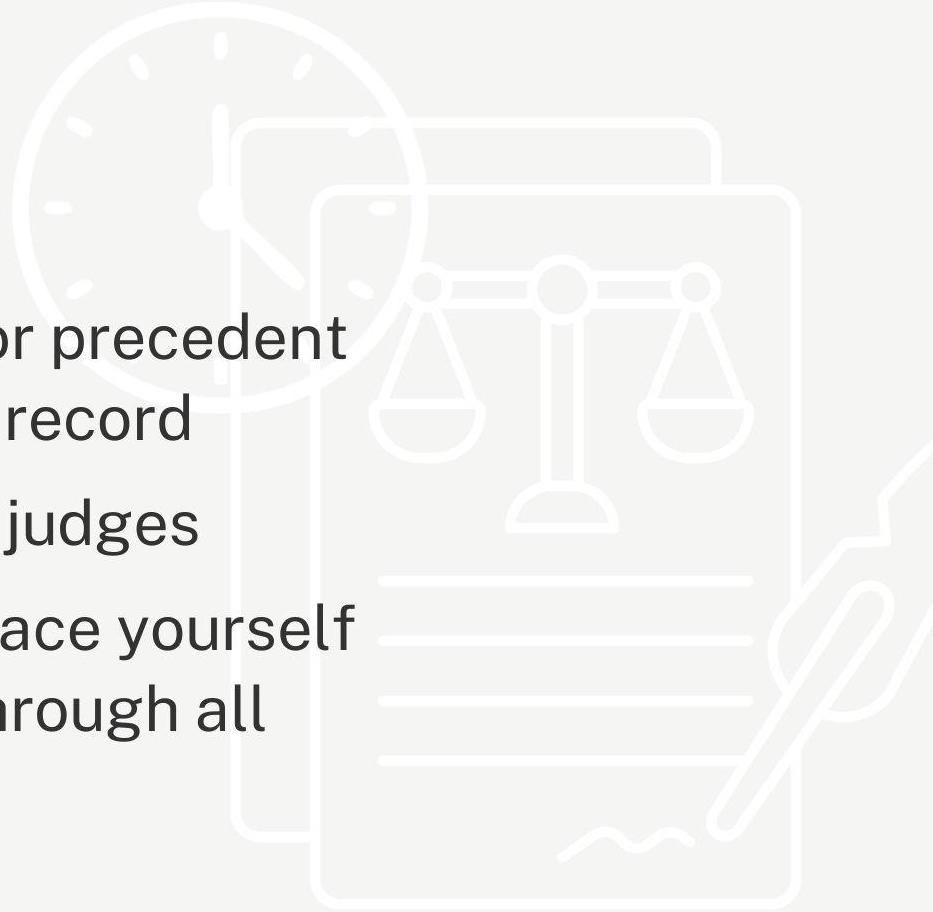
Before your main argument, give a brief overview of your key points.

—————→ *“I will offer two points...”*

State 2-4 key points from your argument (the main points in your outline).

Main Argument

- Reference specific cases for precedent and specific facts from the record
- Answer questions from the judges
- Keep an eye on the clock! Pace yourself to make sure you can get through all your arguments





Notes on Judges

Judges may ask questions at any point in your argument. Some ask more than others, so always be prepared!

Respect is key: address them as “Your Honor,” and stop talking immediately when they start speaking.

Judges are not your enemies!
Your interaction with them is a dialogue, not a fight.

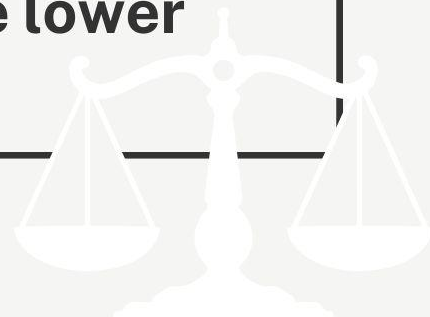
Conclusion

Within the last minute of your time,* finish your last argument and go to your conclusion.

**If a judge asks you a question during this time, ask “may I answer the question and briefly conclude?” to be granted enough extra time to finish up.*

Summarize the key points you outlined in your roadmap.

Prayer for relief: “For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully request that this court [affirm/reverse] the decision of the lower court.”



Harvard Law Ames Moot Court Competition 2025:

*Curious
what moot
court really
looks like?*



(You will not be expected to be at law school level.)

Thank you!

Interested in learning more?
Find us at:

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Or contact your UMD coach
with any further questions!

