

## Overview

The Social Court is a court based online where debates are hosted surrounding hot social topics and the public acts as the jury to choose the verdict. The point of the court is to encourage civil debate about various aspects of society, such as religion, politics, race, or anything else.

The court initiates a debate with a Court Attorney arguing for the court's opinion, and once the verdict is chosen the court leads activism in favor of it, even if the jury rules in favor of the opposition.

## Trial Progression

Stage	Length of Time
Case Introduction	Indefinite
Negative Selection	2 weeks
Exhibit Submission	1 week
Opening Arguments	2 weeks
Rebuttal	1 week
Second Rebuttal	1 week
Closing Remarks	2 weeks
Verdict	1 week
Post-Trial Statements	1 week

## Trial Stages

### **Case Introduction**

The court only hears 1 case at a time, but if the court isn't hearing a case, the court introduces one. This is done by the Court Attorney (CA) introducing the case.

The CA is the only one allowed to introduce cases. The CA introduces one by publishing a Preliminary Summary, a document introducing the case to the public through the following information:

- Case Number
- Resolved Statement\*

\*The resolved statement is a declaration of the CA's opinion (e.g. Resolved: Abortion should be legal). This is the statement the CA will try to persuade the public to agree with in the case, and the issue the case is meant to resolve.

### **Negative Selection**

In the trial, there are two sides: the Affirmative and the Negative. The Affirmative is the side that agrees with the resolved statements, while the Negative disagrees with it.

Since the CA writes the resolved statement, they argue in favor of it in the trial, but the court has no one who disagrees with the statement, and that is where the public comes in.

A public call is sent out for someone to debate for the Negative side in the trial. The call will be in the form of a post on the blog, and the post will contain all the case's details.

Anyone wishing to become the Negative debater will need to email the Social Court email address saying they want to debate and for which case, indicated by the case number.

It will work on a first come, first serve basis, and once a Negative debater has been selected, a Pre-Case Summary will be written, containing all of the info in the Preliminary Summary as well as the debaters on each side.

If no one jumps up right away, the court will wait for 2 weeks, and if no debater steps forward by the end of that, the case will be dropped.

### **Exhibit Submission**

Exhibits are the evidence used in a case to support each side's claims. They are the only evidence permitted in the Social Court, and can only be submitted before the opening statements of the trial.

Once the Pre-Case Summary has been written, each side will have a week to submit their exhibits. They must be submitted by email to the court email address.

The email must contain the side the exhibits are sent for, the case number and the exhibits, one per line and numbered.

The exhibits must be online, either a photo, video, article, pdf, or anything else on the internet that can be linked to through a hyperlink.

Once the exhibits are submitted\*, they will be reviewed by the court to see if they are illegal by following these guidelines:

- Hearsay
- Forgery
- Biased

If an exhibit falls under one or more of those criteria, it is illegal and not permitted as evidence in the trial.

With the exhibits collected, the illegal ones and duplicates will be removed, and then the exhibits will be labeled by letter and published.

\*Exhibits are optional and a debater is not required to have evidence for their case, though it's highly recommended

## **Opening Arguments**

The Opening Arguments are each sides' first chance to express their points. Once the exhibits have been published (or the 1 week window for them has concluded), each side will be given 2 weeks to submit their opening arguments.

The Opening Arguments are limited to 750 words. The arguments (and all other statements in the trial) can also be sent in video or audio format, and in that case the video/audio can be 5 minutes or shorter.

In the statements, as like all others in the trial, exhibits can be referenced but don't (and won't) need to be linked to or visually shown.

Once both sides' opening arguments are in, the Affirmative opening statement will be published, and then two days later, the Negative opening statement will be published. Neither of the arguments are allowed to be published until they're both submitted.

Written arguments must be submitted by Google Docs or an online pdf through the pdf archives, and videos must be submitted through YouTube. With the files uploaded, the side must email the link to the court email address.

If a side hasn't submitted their statements by the end of the two weeks, they will be held in contempt, the statement of a side will be published automatically (if at least one of the sides has submitted a statement), and then the rest of the trial will be voided.

If neither side submits an opening statement, a mistrial will be called.

## **Rebuttal & Second Rebuttal**

The rebuttal is a chance for each side to respond to the last statement the other side made. Rebuttals aren't mandatory, though highly recommended.

Once both sides have published their opening statements, they will have a week from the publication of the Negative opening statements to submit their rebuttals.

Submission protocol is the same as with the opening statements, only that rebuttals are limited to 250 words written or 1 minute and 40 seconds by video.

If one or more of the sides doesn't submit a rebuttal by the end of the week, any submitted rebuttals will be published, the second rebuttal will be omitted, and no penalties will be incurred.

If both sides submit rebuttals, once they're both in, the Affirmative rebuttal will be published, followed by the Negative rebuttal the next day.

If both rebuttals were submitted, each side is permitted a second rebuttal. Once the first rebuttals are published, each side will have a week to submit their second rebuttals.

If a side doesn't wish to give a second rebuttal, they can email the court to skip the stage, and if both sides want to skip the stage, it will be omitted, and the trial will move on to closing statements.

If one or both of the sides do want a second rebuttal, it will occur, using all of the same rules as the initial rebuttal.

If one of the sides requests a third rebuttal, it will occur under the same rules as the first two with the exception of the submission time being only 5 days, and the rebuttal length can only be 200 words or 1 and a half minutes.

After the end of the second rebuttal, each side has 24 hours to request a third rebuttal through email to the court email.

### **Closing Remarks**

Closing Remarks are the place where each side will wrap up their case by summarizing their points and rebuttals. The closing remarks will follow all of the

same rules for submission length\*, consequences, and all other protocol as the opening arguments, but with one exception.

Failure to submit closing arguments will result in the side being held in contempt, but a mistrial won't be called if both sides are unable to submit their closing remarks.

\*Another difference from the opening statements is that the two weeks for submission will start on the date of the publication of the final rebuttal

### **Verdict**

Once the closing statements get published, the trial will officially be over, and it will be time for the verdict.

An online poll will be opened once the closing remarks are published, and the poll will be open to the public. The public will act as the jury and be allowed to vote on what they want the verdict to be.

The voting will last for one week, and once that week had concluded, the poll will be closed and the votes will be tallied.

With the votes counted, a verdict summary will be published, which will contain the resolved statement, breakdown of the votes by number and percentage as well as the verdict, explicitly stated.

### **Post-Trial Statements**

The job of the court, since it has no legal authority, is to lead activism in favor of the verdict of the case. Once the verdict is given, each side has a week to deliver their statements regarding the case.

The statements are non-mandatory, but highly recommended and tremendously influential in the execution of activism.

The winner of the trial is given 200 words, or 12 minutes, to give their activism speech. This speech thanks the public, restates their position and suggest how the court should lead activism.

It will be showcased and archived, though it had no bearing over the actions of the court.

The loser of the trial is given 1500 words, or 10 minutes, to give a dissenting opinion. The dissenting opinion is the place where the loser concedes the trial, restates their position and explains why the verdict shouldn't be acted on.

The dissenting opinion will be showcased and archived, but has no bearing on the actions of the court.

Once both statements are in, the activism speech will be published first, followed by the dissenting opinion 1 day later.

If both of the statements aren't in by the end of the week, the submitted statement will be published (or nothing, if neither statement is in).

Once the statements are in, the trial will be archived, and the next trial will begin.

## Vocabulary

Resolved statement - A statement of the opinion of the Affirmative side that outlines the issue the trial hopes to resolve

Dropped - the case is removed from the site (and archives) and forgotten

Hearsay - A secondhand account of an event or piece of information (e.g. a YouTube comment referencing a science study)

Forgery - Visibly faked, invalid, or evidence that isn't credible in any reasonable sense

Biased - A source clearly made for the trial/debater or a source with outlandish, untestable claims in favor of one side

Exhibit - A piece of valid evidence in a trial

Held in contempt - The name of an offender will be published as an offender along with their offense, all of which will be archived with the case, and their name and email will be added to a list of those unable to debate in a trial in the future

Mistrial - The trial is ended and purged from all archives and public records

Voided - The rest of the trial is thrown out, and the vote for a verdict is immediately called, and both sides are denied the right to post-trial statements

Omitted - A certain stage of the trial is skipped, but the rest of the trial proceeds as normal

Rejected - Not presented in trial and forbidden from the court proceedings of the case



## Rules

1. Swearing is punishable by being held in contempt
2. Comments are disabled on all court documents
3. Attempts at swaying public opinion during the trial outside of the actual trial on court forums is punishable by being held in contempt
4. A submission for a trial that doesn't follow the guidelines for the stage will be rejected, though no penalties will be incurred
5. Any inappropriate exhibits or references in submission will result in being held in contempt, though exceptions are allowed for relevance

## Submission Document Templates (Email Format)

### **Negative Application**

Subject: Case (Case #) Negative Application

(For the body, position on case and why you want to debate in the trial)

Sincerely,  
Applicant

### **Exhibit Submission Form**

Subject: Case (Case #) Exhibit Submission (Side)

1. (First Exhibit)
2. (Second Exhibit)
3. (Third Exhibit)

(Continue with all exhibits; make sure they're links to the exhibits)

Sincerely,  
Submitter's Name

### **Trial Submission Form**

Subject: Case (Case #) (Side) (Stage)

(Submitted material/link)

Sincerely,  
Submitter's Name