

A guide for self-represented individuals

1. [Legal Representation](#)
2. [Starting the Appeal Process](#)
3. [After Filing Your Appeal](#)
4. [Preparing for the Pre-Hearing Conference](#)
5. [Attending the Pre-Hearing Conference](#)
6. [Possible Outcomes from the Pre-Hearing Conference](#)
7. [Preparing for a Full Hearing](#)
8. [The Day of the Full Hearing](#)
9. [Conclusion of the Full Hearing](#)
10. [After the Full Hearing](#)
11. [Issuance of a Decision](#)
12. [Understanding Your Appeal Rights](#)
13. [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Legal representation

An individual who files an appeal with the Civil Service Commission (Commission), usually referred to as an “Appellant”, has a right to represent themselves before the Commission, and many do. They also have a right to hire and be represented by counsel for all or part of the appeal process. Resources to obtain counsel can be found at: [Legal Assistance | Mass.gov](#).

Counsel for the opposing party, usually referred to as the Respondent, does not represent and may not advise a self-represented Appellant except to suggest that the self-represented Appellant secure independent counsel.

While Commission employees, including a designated hearing officer, may provide some legal **information** at various stages of the appeal process, they may not provide legal **advice** as an attorney would be able to do, because the hearing officer must remain impartial.

The information that follows is meant to provide practical information, but not legal advice, to the Appellant who chooses to represent themselves before the Commission.

Starting the appeal process

Before filing an appeal with the Commission, you may have questions about the **types** of appeals heard by the Commission; whether a type of appeal applies to your individual circumstances; and

the legal standard associated with each type of appeal. The best source of information to answer those questions can be found by visiting:

- [Learn more about the types of appeals heard by the Civil Service Commission | Mass.gov](#)

After reviewing this information, you may still have questions about whether the Commission has jurisdiction (the power to make legal decisions and order a disposition) regarding the matter for which **you** are seeking to file an appeal. Typically, those types of questions **cannot** be answered by the Commission before an individual files an appeal as the Commission is unable to answer questions that could be considered advice or counsel to an individual who may become a party to an appeal.

If you decide to file an appeal, the quickest and easiest way to do so is by visiting:

- [Online Appeal Filing](#)

Here, you can file your appeal with the Commission online, upload any attachments and pay your filing fee electronically.

When filing your appeal with the Commission, it is important to follow the instructions carefully and attach any requested documents. For example, if you are contesting a disciplinary action by a city or town or state agency, you should attach the notice of discipline. If you are contesting a decision to bypass you for appointment or promotion, you should attach the notice of bypass that you received.

Helpful Tip:

- At this initial appeal filing stage, you should **not** attach any documents beyond those requested and referenced above. For example, you may be tempted to attach numerous documents to contest why a discipline or bypass decision was not justified. You will have a full opportunity to submit such documents **later** in the appeals process.

After filing your appeal

After filing your appeal, it is important to monitor your email account regularly as all notices and correspondence from the Commission will be sent **only** to the email address you provided when filing your appeal.

You may also want to create a physical or electronic folder to store all documents related to your appeal, including those documents that you will be receiving from the Commission.

Usually within minutes of filing your appeal online, you will receive an email confirming that the appeal has been electronically filed. You may also receive a text message confirming that your filing fee was received. No action is required of you at this time. However, if you do not receive a confirmation email, you should contact the Commission immediately via phone at (617) 979-1900 or via email at cschelp@mass.gov.

Within one week of filing your appeal, but often sooner, you will receive an email from the Civil Service Commission with two attachments: an acknowledgment of appeal; and a notice of pre-hearing conference. Almost immediately thereafter, you will receive a Webex invitation via email.

The acknowledgment of appeal includes the “docket number” assigned to your appeal, which you should reference in all future correspondence with the Commission, along with confirmation of the date that your appeal was filed.

The notice of pre-hearing conference contains the date and time that your **remote** “pre-hearing conference” will take place along with instructions on how to prepare for the pre-hearing conference. It is important to make a note of and set a reminder regarding the date and time of your pre-hearing conference as missing the pre-hearing conference without “good cause” could result in your appeal being dismissed.

You should “accept” the separate Webex invitation you receive so that you will be able to attend the pre-hearing conference remotely via Webex at the scheduled date and time.

Helpful Tips:

- A representative for the “Respondent” is included in all email correspondence sent to you by the Commission. You will typically see that person’s name at the bottom of each notice and their email address will be in the “to” field of the email. It is important that you include this person, or any individual who later files a “notice of appearance” for the Respondent in **all** email correspondence that you send to the Commission. Communicating with the Commission, without copying the opposing party, is considered impermissible “ex parte” communication.
- If you are unable to attend the pre-hearing conference on the date and time listed on the notice of pre-hearing conference, you should immediately try to contact the other party and get mutually acceptable dates for a re-scheduled pre-hearing to be held within 30 days. Then, submit your request for a continuance via email to cschelp@mass.gov with a copy to the counsel or representative for the Respondent.

Preparing for the pre-hearing conference

Stay organized. Double check that you have marked the date and time of your pre-hearing in your calendar and save all documents in a physical or electronic folder for easy reference. This is **your** appeal, and it is **your** responsibility to treat the proceedings seriously, which includes reading all correspondence and carefully following instructions.

Get ready to participate remotely via Webex. Webex is a common and widely used videoconferencing application that is easy to navigate. However, well prior to the pre-hearing (i.e. – **not** the day of the pre-hearing) you should visit: <https://www.webex.com/test-meeting.html> to test your camera and microphone on the device you will be using to participate in the remote pre-hearing conference. If, after going to the Webex test site, you are having technical issues, contact the Commission at cschelp@mass.gov or (617) 979-1900. Any time spent trying to troubleshoot Webex-related issues at the start of the pre-hearing only takes away from the time available to address your appeal.

Prepare and submit a pre-hearing conference memo. One week prior to the scheduled pre-hearing conference, you must submit what is called a “pre-hearing memo” to the Commission at cscdocuments@mass.gov with a copy to the counsel or representative for the Respondent. The Respondent has the same requirement. The pre-hearing memo can be as short as a paragraph or up to four pages, but should contain the following information: a) a concise summary of why you believe your appeal should be allowed; b) a list of prospective witnesses, including yourself, noting if subpoenas will be required; c) a list of proposed exhibits and/or anticipated requests for records you may be seeking from the Respondent or others; and d) acceptable dates for a potential full evidentiary hearing within 45 to 90 days of the pre-hearing in the event that a full hearing is required.

It is not uncommon for an Appellant to have no witnesses (other than themselves) or no exhibits, beyond the documents that the Respondent may be introducing. If that is the case, simply note that on your pre-hearing memo. You will have the opportunity to change your mind and add witnesses or exhibits later in the appeals process should you choose to do so.

The format of the pre-hearing memo is not important, but you may use the following template if you prefer:

- [Pre-Hearing Memo Template](#)

Helpful Tip:

If you are unable to attend the pre-hearing conference on the date and time listed in the notice of pre-hearing conference, you should immediately contact the Commission at cschelp@mass.gov.

Attending the pre-hearing conference

The pre-hearing conference is an informal meeting conducted remotely by a member of the Commission and typically lasts 30-40 minutes. Although “informal”, you should treat the proceedings with the seriousness they deserve, wearing appropriate attire and making sure that you are in a private area that allows you to give your undivided attention to the issues being discussed.

To make final preparations for the pre-hearing, you should review the information you provided in your pre-hearing memo along with the pre-hearing memo submitted by the Respondent and any other information forwarded to you related to your appeal. Have a pen and paper available before the pre-hearing begins to take notes and write down any questions you might want to ask.

In addition to the Webex email invitation you already received, you will receive another “reminder” Webex email approximately 15 minutes before the pre-hearing is scheduled to begin. You can use the original invitation or the reminder email to “join” the Webex meeting. It is best to hit the join button 5 or 10 minutes before the scheduled start time to ensure that you are not having any technical issues.

A hearing officer, typically a Commissioner, will open the pre-hearing by asking everyone on the Webex call to introduce themselves. It is not uncommon for the Respondent to be represented by counsel and to have one or more additional representatives present on the call as well.

After introductions and providing an overview of the process, the hearing officer will usually try to facilitate an agreement on “stipulated” or agreed-upon facts. This could include such things as when you received notice from the Respondent about the action or inaction that you are appealing, when you filed the appeal with the Commission, etc.

Based on certain undisputed facts, it is not uncommon for the Respondent to raise certain procedural issues as part of the pre-hearing conference, including whether the Commission has the authority to hear your appeal. For example, if the Respondent believes that your appeal was not filed in a timely manner, they could ask the Commission to consider dismissing your appeal based solely on the issue of timeliness. If such issues are raised, you will have a full and fair opportunity to address them, both during and after the pre-hearing conference.

Each party, including yourself, will then be given an opportunity to summarize their contentions. For you, this means providing a preview of why the action or inaction of the Respondent was not justified. For example, if you were bypassed for appointment, you would want to provide a brief overview of why you believe the Respondent did not have “reasonable justification” to bypass you,

The hearing officer may ask both parties, including yourself, to answer follow-up questions which will help them decide the appropriate next step in the appeal process.

Possible Outcomes from the Pre-Hearing Conference

What happens next in the process is largely dependent on the specific facts related to your appeal. Three of the most common outcomes after a pre-hearing conference are as follows:

- **Settlement and/or withdrawal.** Oftentimes, after both parties present a preview of their argument, the parties choose to pursue a settlement agreement and/or the Appellant may choose to withdraw their appeal. Any decision to withdraw your appeal is voluntary.
- **Submission of “motions”.** This typically occurs when there is an issue related to jurisdiction or the hearing officer believes that the appeal can be decided based on the undisputed facts. When this occurs, the hearing officer will typically issue a “procedural order” outlining what should be submitted to the Commission by both parties, after which time the Commission issues a decision without a full, evidentiary hearing.
- **Scheduling of a “full, evidentiary hearing”.** This occurs when there is no jurisdictional barrier and when there are disputed facts that must be resolved by conducting a formal hearing. For example, if a permanent, tenured employee is contesting their termination for misconduct, there may be a factual dispute as to whether the employee actually engaged in the alleged misconduct. The next sections of this guide relate to those appeals where a full hearing is scheduled to occur.

When a full hearing is necessary, you will be asked for mutually acceptable dates for a full hearing, which will typically be held in person within 45-90 days of the pre-hearing at the CSC offices in Boston or at an off-site hearing location in Springfield, Lowell or North Dartmouth. Before the pre-hearing, both parties **must** check their own availability and the availability of key witnesses so that a full hearing date can be set at the conclusion of the pre-hearing if necessary.

Preparing for a full hearing

Shortly after the pre-hearing is concluded, you will receive a detailed “procedural order” and a “notice of full hearing”. Together, these documents provide you with information regarding the date, time and location of the in-person hearing as well as the steps you should take to prepare yourself for the full hearing.

It is important that you use the time before the full hearing wisely to ensure that you are prepared to present your case on the day of the full hearing.

You have the right to request documents from the Respondent or send them written questions about things you want to know to prepare for the full hearing. Whether you are requesting documents or information, you need to make this request in writing and email it to the attorney or representative for the Respondent. If the Respondent does not provide you with the requested documents or information, you may ask the Commission to “compel” its production by sending an email to the Commission at cscdocuments@mass.gov. As a reminder, any email sent to the Commission must be copied to the counsel or representative for the Respondent.

If you wish to have a witness testify on the day of the full hearing, you may ask this person to appear voluntarily or, if necessary, you may request authorization from the Commission to issue a [subpoena](#). You can request a subpoena to require this person’s attendance at the hearing by following the instructions at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/request-a-subpoena>.

At least two weeks prior to the full hearing, you must submit the following information to the Commission at cscdocuments@mass.gov with a copy to the Respondent:

- An electronic copy of exhibits in PDF format. It is important to follow the instructions that you received after the pre-hearing conference regarding the format of the exhibits, including the need to: a) [redact all personal identifying information](#); b) separate exhibits with a title page that includes the number and title of the exhibit; c) insert bates numbers on the top left corner of the exhibits.
- An electronic copy of a separate exhibit list in Excel format. You should use the spreadsheet that was forwarded to you after the pre-hearing conference.
- An electronic copy of a separate “participant list” in Excel format that lists all the individuals, including yourself, who will be attending the full hearing at your request or through subpoena. Again, you should use the spreadsheet that was forwarded to you after the pre-hearing conference.

Helpful Tips:

- This is often the part of the appeals process that self-represented individuals find to be the most challenging. For that reason, we have designated someone to assist both parties with the full hearing preparation. If you are having any difficulty with logistical issues (e.g. – requesting a subpoena, bates numbering or redacting proposed exhibits), you may email the Commission at cschelp@mass.gov and someone will contact you and try to provide you with **logistical** assistance as needed. That individual cannot serve as your attorney or provide you with any advice, but, rather, may answer questions and provide assistance with logistical issues only.

- After the full hearing has been scheduled, requests to change the date of the full hearing are only granted in “extraordinary circumstances”. Even if counsel for the other party agrees to a continuance, that does not guarantee that the Commission will allow the request, so you should take all reasonable steps to ensure that you are able to attend the full hearing on the scheduled date for before filing a request to continue at cschelp@mass.gov.

The day of a full hearing

It is important to arrive on time (or early), dressed in appropriate attire, at the hearing location, planning ahead for issues related to public transportation, parking, security clearance, etc.

For hearings in:

Boston: Proceed to the second level of the Saltonstall Building at 100 Cambridge Street; present Building Security with a photo ID and proceed to Court Room 2E after passing through the metal detectors unless instructed otherwise.

North Dartmouth: Enter the main entrance of UMASS School of Law and follow the signs to the lower level.

Springfield: Enter the building through the public entrance of the Springfield State Building at 436 Dwight Street, pass through the metal detectors and take the elevator up to the third floor. After exiting the elevator, proceed to the court room half way down the long hallway.

Lowell: Enter the Armand Mercier Community Center through the public entrance and the proceed to the hearing room directly on your left.

You must bring the following documents with you on the day of the full hearing:

- 4 hard copies of the exhibits for: a) you; b) the opposing party; c) witnesses; and d) the hearing officer.
- 3 hard copies of the Exhibit List for: a) you; b) the opposing party; and c) hearing officer.

You should also come prepared with a brief “opening statement” that you will be permitted to give at the beginning of the hearing.

The hearing officer will greet both parties and let you know where the parties and their witnesses should sit.

Oftentimes, before the recording is started, the hearing officer will walk through various preliminary issues, such as proposed exhibits, any objections to proposed exhibits and any other procedural issues.

Once the preliminary issues are addressed, the hearing officer will then turn on the audio/video recorder and read a brief opening statement. That opening statement will include a reference to the fact that the hearing is being conducted in accordance with the “standard adjudicatory rules

of practice and procedure”. These are rules commonly used by adjudicatory boards such as the Commission. You can view those rules at:

- [**801 CMR 1: Standard adjudicatory rules**](#)

You will notice that there is a reference to “formal” rules and “informal rules”. The full hearing is conducted under the “formal rules”.

The hearing officer uses the rules as a “guide” but may deviate from them for reasons related to efficiency. For example, the rules state the Appellant presents their case first, but, for practical reasons, the Respondent will almost always present their case first before the Commission.

To begin, both parties, including yourself, may make a brief opening statement. This is an opportunity to provide the hearing officer with a preview of what you believe the evidence will show. For example, if you were bypassed for appointment for reasons that you believe were inaccurate and/or stale, your opening statement might outline how the evidence will show this. You might tell the hearing officer that, “through my testimony and the cross examination of the Respondent’s witnesses, along with the documents submitted today, I intend to show that certain reasons for bypassing me are not supported by the evidence and others are too stale to serve as a valid basis for bypass.”

After the opening statements, the Respondent will be given an opportunity to present witnesses. This is where it is helpful to understand the difference between “direct testimony” and “cross examination”. Because the Respondent called them as a witness, the initial questions they ask of the witness are considered “direct testimony”. When you, as the opposing party, ask that same witness a question, it is considered “cross examination.” Cross examination should typically be related to the questions that were asked during direct testimony or else explore information stated in exhibits familiar to the witness.

The following is an illustrative example. A candidate is bypassed for appointment as a police officer because of their poor driving record. During “direct testimony” of a Respondent witness, counsel for the Respondent might ask a witness if they had a chance to review your driving history and, if so, to tell the hearing officer about the content of your driving history, which possibly included a history of surchargeable accidents and speeding tickets and inspection sticker violations. During “cross examination” of this same witness, you might ask that same witness if they considered how far in the past those accidents occurred; or whether they considered other factors that might include that you resided in an area which has a higher police presence or that some of the driving history was related to financial reasons (i.e. – inability to pay for repairs leading to an inspection sticker violation.) In this example, your questions during “cross examination” are different, but are still directly related to the issue raised during “direct testimony”.

It is helpful if you bring a pen and writing pad so you can take notes during direct testimony, making it easier to remember questions that you want to ask during cross examination.

If you are unable to figure out exactly how to phrase your question, simply tell the hearing officer what information you are trying to elicit from the witness and the hearing officer might be able to put your request in an acceptable form of a question for the witness to answer.

Once the Respondent witnesses have testified, the Respondent “rests” their case, relying on the witness testimony and the exhibits submitted.

Now it is your turn to present your case. You have already made your opening statement, so you can proceed directly to witness testimony. If you asked or subpoenaed witnesses, you will typically want to take their testimony before you testify on your own behalf.

Any witness you call will be asked to sit in a designated seat and be sworn in by the hearing officer. You should be prepared with your own “direct testimony” questions for this witness which allows the hearing officer to know who this witness is and what relevant information they have pertaining to your appeal. Typically, you would want to ask the witness to identify themselves, state and spell their name for the record and give a brief background of themselves, such as where they are from and their professional and educational background, if relevant. For example, if you were bypassed for appointment due to your driving history and your current employment has a driving component, you may want to call your current supervisor to testify. You would want to ask that witness their name, place of employment and their relationship to you (i.e. – your supervisor). You may then want to ask that supervisor to tell the hearing officer how long they have served as your supervisor and to talk about your driving-related performance as an employee. After you have completed your “direct examination” of any witness, the Respondent will have an opportunity to “cross-examine” that witness.

Once your called witnesses have completed their testimony, it is now time for you to testify on your own behalf. You may be asked by the hearing officer to move to the designated seat for witnesses and you will then be sworn in, affirming that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth subject to the pains and penalties of perjury.

To start your testimony, be prepared to give a brief background of yourself, including your age, where you currently reside, your educational background, your professional and/or military experience, if applicable, and any other background information that may be relevant to your appeal.

Then you should be prepared to offer testimony relevant to your appeal. Using the example above, where the candidate is bypassed for appointment due to their driving history, you might want to walk through each of the entries on your driving history and talk about each of them. For example, if one of the surchargeable accidents on your driving history occurred many years ago and involved minimal damage and no injuries, that would be relevant “testimony” that you would want to share with the hearing officer. Again, this is your appeal and your opportunity to present your case, so you should come prepared to share relevant testimony with the hearing officer. For example, it would be less helpful for you to testify that you simply have no memory of an accident

that occurred many years ago and more helpful if you reviewed relevant documents before your testimony and provided details about the incident to the hearing officer.

To ensure a level playing field, the hearing officer may ask you additional questions to elicit testimony relevant to your appeal, but, ultimately, it is your responsibility to provide relevant testimony to the hearing officer on your own behalf. Once you have completed your own “direct testimony”, counsel for the Respondent may have questions for you as part of “cross examination.” During this portion of your testimony, it is important to listen to the question carefully. If you don’t understand the question or can’t hear the question, you should say so. If you don’t know the answer to a question, it is important not to guess, but only testify to what you know or remember.

Conclusion of the Full Hearing

After all witnesses have testified, the hearing officer may give both parties the opportunity to make closing statements and/or provide the parties with the opportunity to submit “proposed decisions” (discussed below), typically within 30 days of the hearing date. There may also be outstanding requests for documents that either party may be required to respond to.

After a full hearing

After the full hearing, the hearing officer will email you a link to the audio / video recording of the hearing. Upon receipt, you should download the recording as the link will only be available to access for a limited time.

Along with the link to the hearing recording, the hearing officer may also send you instructions regarding the filing of proposed decisions, with a couple of sample decisions attached. The submission of proposed decisions is meant to provide both parties with one final opportunity to share with the hearing officer suggested findings and conclusions.

If you find it challenging to follow the prescribed format, you can simply submit an email, in your own words, to the Commission, summarizing what you believe are the most important points related to why the hearing officer should allow your appeal. You are not being graded or evaluated on the appearance of your proposed decision.

After the period for submitting proposed decisions elapses, the record is officially closed and it is now the hearing officer’s job to review the entire record and draft a decision for review by the full, 5-member Civil Service Commission. Although the hearing officer works hard to draft decisions in a timely manner, you should keep in mind that the hearing officer has many appeals assigned to them other than your own.

General information regarding how long the appeals process takes can be found by viewing the Commission’s quarterly and annual statistics at:

- [Civil Service Commission Statistics | Mass.gov](#)

Issuance of a Decision

Once the full Commission has voted on a final decision regarding your appeal, you and counsel for the opposing party will be sent a copy of the decision **via email only**. It is important to regularly monitor your email account and to notify the Commission of any change in your contact information.

After sending a copy of the decision to both parties, the decision is then posted to the Commission's website at:

- [Civil Service Decisions | Mass.gov](#)

The Commission may make certain redactions or take other measures before posting the decision to the CSC website consistent with [CSC's privacy protocols](#).

Understanding Your Appeal Rights

Both in the cover email message you receive with your decision, and at the bottom of the last page of the decision itself, you will see important information related to your right to ask the Commission to reconsider its decision and/or your right to appeal the Commission's decision to Superior Court. You should read this information carefully as it references time deadlines for filing each request. Importantly, if you ask the Commission to "reconsider" its decision, you should be aware that this does **not** stop the clock from ticking on your right to file an appeal in Superior Court.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What if I can't afford the appeal filing fee?**

Information regarding appeal fee waivers can be found at:

- [Request an appeal fee waiver | Mass.gov](#)

- **What if I decide to withdraw my appeal?**

Follow the instructions at:

- [Withdraw your civil service appeal | Mass.gov](#)

- **What if I obtain an attorney after filing my appeal?**

Have your attorney immediately complete the below "notice of appearance" and email it to cschelp@mass.gov:

- [Appearance Form](#)

- **How long does a full hearing last?**

Most full hearings are completed in one day or less, but, in limited cases, the hearing may carry over to additional day(s). When that happens, the hearing officer works with both parties to find mutually acceptable dates for additional days of hearing.

- **Is the full hearing open to the public?**

Most hearings at the Commission are open to the public, but certain hearings (i.e. – those related to disciplinary matters) are private unless one party requests that the hearing be public. The hearing officer maintains discretion to close all or part of the hearing for certain reasons, including to protect the privacy of private citizens testifying before the Commission.

- **Can the full hearing be conducted remotely, as opposed to in-person?**

Generally, full hearings before the Commission are held in-person for various reasons, including that the hearing officer is often required to make credibility assessments of witnesses, which is easier to do when the proceeding is in person. If a particular witness is unable to attend the full hearing for “good cause”, the hearing officer may allow that witness to testify remotely. Separate instructions will be provided to the parties when this is allowed.

- **What if I miss my hearing date?**

The hearing officer will email you what is referred to as “An Order to Show Good Cause” why your appeal should not be dismissed based on your failure to “prosecute your appeal” (i.e. – attend the scheduled hearing). Unless you are able show good cause for your failure to attend, your appeal may be dismissed.

- **Can I bring someone with me to the full hearing?**

Generally, yes, but you should list that person’s name on the “participant” list that is submitted two weeks prior to the hearing. You should note on the participant list whether the person will be an “observer” or a “representative” helping you with your appeal. If that person(s) is also a witness, they may be asked to leave the hearing room until it is time for their testimony, which is called “sequestration”.

- **Is it OK to contact counsel for the Respondent?**

Yes, if you are representing yourself, you may speak directly with counsel for the Respondent. This often occurs when you are working to exchange documents in preparation for the hearing and/or discussing whether to settle the matter without the need for a full hearing.

- **What if I or one of my witnesses needs an accommodation to participate in the hearing?**

Send a request to cschelp@mass.gov as soon as you become aware of the need for an accommodation. The Commission will assess the request and ensure that any reasonable accommodations are made.

- **What if I or one of my witnesses needs a translator?**

Send a request to cschelp@mass.gov as soon as you become aware of the need for a translator.

- **What if I don't understand certain legal terms being used at the hearing?**

At the appropriate time, ask the hearing officer to provide you with an explanation.

- **What is an Exhibit?**

An exhibit is anything tangible (something you can see, touch, or hold) that is presented at the hearing to help a party prove their case or disprove the opposing side's arguments. This could be a document, photograph, object, or even a video.

- **How do I redact information from Exhibits?**

Before submitting documents to the Civil Service Commission, you must remove or block out certain sensitive information to protect your privacy and that of others. This process is called redaction. Redaction is your responsibility.

Use a black marker on hard copies or redaction tools in PDF editors (like Adobe Acrobat) for electronic documents. Make sure the redacted information cannot be recovered or read.

If you're unsure whether something should be redacted, review the [CSC Privacy Protocols](#) or contact cschelp@mass.gov for assistance.

- **What is a Bates Stamp/Number and How do I Create One?**

A **Bates Stamp** or **Bates Number** is a way to number each page of your documents so they're easy to organize, track, and refer to during a hearing. It's typically used when you submit multiple pages of evidence. Insert bates stamps/ numbers on the top left corner of the exhibits. You can also use free online tools or Word/Adobe to insert numbers. Keep it simple and consistent across all your pages. The Commission has a bates numbering system for both Appellants and Respondents, which begin with either an A (for Appellants) or an R (for Respondents), followed by four digits. For example, if you are the Appellant, the first page of your Exhibits file will have the Bates number A0001, followed by A0002, in that order till the last page. Follow the [instructions](#) on how to create exhibits.

If you need assistance with creating Bates number, contact cschelp@mass.gov.

- **What is Discovery?**

Discovery is the process where both sides in a case share information and evidence before the hearing. It helps everyone understand the facts and prepare their arguments fairly. If you are a non-represented party, you can request documents, ask written questions (called interrogatories), or ask for records from the other side. You must also share your evidence if they ask for it. To meet this requirement, stay organized, respond on time, and keep copies of everything you send or receive. If you wish to know what the other side knows and what they plan to say or present to support their claims or defenses, you can request such information during discovery to better prepare yourself.

- **May I object during the hearing?**

Yes. You may object when you think the other side's question or evidence breaks the rules. Common reasons include questions that are confusing; leading (questions that suggest the answer the questioner wants, usually answerable with "yes" or "no"); or asking for something not allowed by the rules. You might also object if the evidence isn't relevant or is unfairly posed to your detriment (*i.e.*, it is both irrelevant and unduly prejudicial). To meet this requirement, listen carefully, speak up by saying "Objection," or something that draws the Hearing Officer's attention to you, and explain briefly why you object.

- **What is Hearsay?**

Hearsay is testimony from a witness based on something someone told them rather than what the witness personally saw or experienced. (For example, "My friend told me the manager was late"). In court it is usually not allowed because the person who made the statement isn't there to be questioned. If you think a witness is voicing hearsay, you can object. But the Commission does not apply the rules of evidence strictly and so a Commissioner or Hearing Officer may consider any *reliable* hearsay evidence.