



Guide to Virtual Hearings

Because of COVID-19, many court hearings are now virtual. That means some or all of the people participate by video or phone. Read below to know how to prepare for a virtual hearing.

How do I know if I have a virtual hearing?



The court will let you know if your hearing is virtual. They may contact you by U.S. mail, email, or phone. They will also let the other parties in your case know.

How do I contact the court?

Contact the court at the phone number or email address provided in your court notice or go to the [Courthouse Locator](#) to find out how to contact the court that serves you.

What if I cannot join at the scheduled hearing time?

You must have a good reason why you cannot participate at the scheduled time. And you must tell the court as soon as possible after receiving the notice.

What if I don't have internet or a phone?

Contact the court as soon as possible. The court may postpone the hearing until everyone can participate safely or help you find a way to participate.

What if I need an interpreter?

To request an interpreter, contact the court or call the Trial Court Helpline at 1-833-91COURT (1-833-912-6878).

Will the court tell me how to join the virtual hearing?

Yes. The court will send you instructions on how to join your virtual hearing by video or by phone.

How to Get Ready if Your Virtual Hearing is by Zoom



Make sure you have good internet connection.



Download the free Zoom app and either click on the link provided or enter the meeting ID and password you have been given. Practice beforehand so you feel comfortable. Zoom offers free lessons through their online [Help Center](#).



Charge your computer or mobile device. If you are calling in by phone, make sure you have enough minutes. If you have a limited number of minutes on your mobile device, please let the court know.



A telephone (landline or cellular phone) may be used to participate in a Zoom virtual hearing. The court will give you the call in information along with the meeting ID and password. Use earbuds or headphones with a built-in microphone, if you can. This frees up your hands, and improves sound quality.



Contact the court if you would like to present evidence, either through a witness or with documents or photos. At the hearing, the judge or judicial officer will decide if any witnesses will be allowed to testify.

Get Your Space Ready!



- Find a quiet place where no one will interrupt you.
- Have all your papers ready, including a list of what you want to say to the judge.
- Know what time your hearing starts and how to log on or what number to call.



Video Tips

- Pressing Start Video will allow your video to display.
- Set the camera at your eye level. If using your phone, prop it up so you can look at it without holding it.
- Look at the camera, not the screen, when you speak.
- Sit in a well-lit room, not too dark, not too bright. No bright lights or windows behind you.
- Zoom has a Virtual Background feature that allows you to display an image as your background rather than your actual surroundings. Visit the Zoom Help Center to learn [how to enable a Virtual Background](#).



Audio Tips

- Follow the rules that the judge provides at the start of the hearing.
- Press the Unmute microphone button before talking.
- Pause before speaking in case there is any audio/video lag. Talk slowly and do not interrupt.
- Mute yourself when not speaking to improve sound quality and limit background noise.

What should I expect during the hearing?

- The judge or judicial officer will make sure you can hear and talk, and go over all the rules.
- If on a videoconference, you can choose either speaker view, where the person speaking will be displayed, or gallery view to see all participants.
- Your hearing is live and will be recorded. Everyone there can hear what you say. It may even be open to the public.

What happens if I have technical difficulties?

- If session ends or your feed freezes, you should immediately follow the steps to log back in (i.e., click on the Zoom link or enter the Meeting ID and password).
- If you continue to experience connection problems and cannot log in to another different device, you can dial in to the conference and participate without video.

Important! You may be connecting from home, but it is still a court hearing. You may not record during, or take photos or screenshots of, the proceedings without first seeking permission from the court.