

# How to Participate in Remote Court Hearings



Because of COVID-19 many courtrooms are closed, and some court hearings are being conducted **remotely**. A remote hearing is when some or all of the people participate by video or by phone instead of in person. The information below may help you prepare for a remote hearing.

## How do I know if I have a remote hearing?



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

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

Contact the clerk of circuit court as soon as possible.

They may:

- Postpone the hearing until everyone can participate safely, or
- Help you find a way to participate, such as free WiFi hot spots, or access to a free phone or internet connection.

## What if I cannot join at the scheduled hearing time?

You must have a good reason why you cannot be present at the scheduled time. And you must tell the court before the hearing. Go to your county's court website. It will explain how to contact the court.

## Will the court tell me how to join the remote hearing?

Yes. The court will send you instructions on how to join your remote hearing by video or by phone. Courts may use different apps and processes. Visit your court's website or call your court to find out how your court does remote hearings.

## How to Get Ready for Your Remote Hearing



Make sure you have a strong internet connection. If possible, test your connection ahead of time.



Either download the Zoom app or use your phone to access the Zoom.us webpage. Practice with the app or program so you feel comfortable.



Charge your computer or mobile device. If you are calling in by phone, make sure you have enough minutes.



Use earbuds or headphones with a microphone, if you can. This frees up your hands and improves sound quality.



Tell the court if you have witnesses. The court will tell them how to join the hearing.

## Get Your Space Ready



- Find a quiet place where people or pets won't disturb you.
- Have all your papers ready, including a list of what you want to say to the court.
- Know what time your hearing starts and how to log on or what number to call.



## General Tips

- Set the camera at eye level. If using your phone, prop it up so you don't have to hold it.
- Dress as you would to appear in court.
- Sit in a well-lit area with no bright lights or windows directly behind you.
- No smoking, eating, or driving during the hearing.



## Audio Tips

- Mute yourself when not speaking to improve sound quality.
- Speak slowly and do not interrupt.
- If you or any of your witnesses need language assistance services, let the clerk of circuit court know as soon as possible.

## What should I expect during the hearing?



When you first join, the court may take you from a "waiting room" to the "hearing room."



The court will make sure you can hear, be heard, and go over all the rules.



You will see a picture or name of each person in your hearing on your screen. If needed, change the name on your picture to identify yourself.



Be aware that your hearing may be live-streamed to the public.



**Important!** You may be participating from home, but it is still a court hearing. Pay attention and follow all rules.

## Need legal help?



More information for finding legal help can be found on the Wisconsin Law Library website (<http://wilawlibrary.gov/>) or the State Bar of Wisconsin website ([www.wisbar.org](http://www.wisbar.org)).