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Video or Phone Hearing / Remote Hearing Tip Sheet

See the tip sheet on the next page.

Do You Have a Video or Phone Court Hearing in Vermont?



Because of COVID-19, most court hearings in Vermont are now “**remote**.” That means some or all of the people participate by video or by phone. Read this tip sheet to know how to prepare for a remote hearing.

How do I know if I have a remote hearing?



The court will tell 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 internet or a phone?

[Contact the court](#) as soon as you can. 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.

What if I can't 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. [Find the phone number](#) and call the court clerk. Keep in mind, the court does not have to reschedule.

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. [Call your court](#) if you have questions.

How do I get ready for the remote hearing?



The court will tell you how to submit evidence. If they don't, ask the court clerk several days before your hearing. You may have to email the evidence, like documents or photos, several days in advance. During the hearing, tell the judge about the evidence you sent in and why it is important.



The court will tell you how to invite witnesses. If they don't, ask the court clerk several days before your hearing. The court will tell the witnesses how to join the hearing. Check with the witnesses to be sure they got the information. Share this tip sheet with them. Also tell witnesses they cannot read from notes when they are in the hearing. During the hearing, tell the judge about your witnesses and why they are important.



Get your space, computer and phone ready in advance! **Plan to have someone watch your kids or pet.** Find a quiet place where no one will make noise or 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, how to log on or what number to call.

If you can, have an uncluttered background behind you. Don't use a virtual background.



Use earbuds or headphones, if you can. This frees your hands and improves sound.



Look good! Set the camera at eye level and arm's length away. If using your phone, prop it up so you don't hold it. Look at the camera, not the screen, when speaking. Dress neatly. If you can, sit in a well-lit room facing a window and no bright lights behind you or above you.



Sound good! Pause before speaking in case there is any audio/video delay. Mute yourself when not speaking to improve sound quality. Say your name each time you speak. Talk slowly. **Do not interrupt the judge, witnesses or the other party.** Avoid using speaker phone.



You will have the choice of joining the meeting by video or by phone. Make sure you have good internet and phone connection. If by phone, it's best to use a landline instead of a cellphone so you can hear and be heard. Have a back-up plan in case your computer, internet or phone isn't working!

If you lose your connection, join in again because the hearing is probably still going on. Have the phone number for the court at hand. If your connection is dropped and you cannot get back into the hearing, call and tell the court staff right away.



Charge your computer or mobile device. Have your charger on hand. If calling, be sure you have enough minutes.



If joining online, avoid Internet Explorer. Download Webex (or whatever app your court says it will use). You may be able to join just by using your web browser. (Learn about joining a Webex meeting at <https://help.webex.com>.) Check if you have a working computer microphone and speakers and test them. If not, you will need join the hearing over the phone.

When using your computer, don't run other programs that might make your computer or connection run slowly. Close web browser tabs that you don't need.

Test out Webex in advance with a friend!

What should I expect during the hearing?

1. Join the hearing about 10 minutes early to troubleshoot any problems. When you first join, you may hear other people talking about another court case. It's just as if you've walked into a busy courtroom. Or you may hear music because you are in a "waiting room." Put your phone or computer on mute, turn off your camera, and just listen. Wait until the meeting host lets you into the hearing, or the judge calls your case or calls your name.
2. The judge will make sure you can hear and talk, and they will go over all the rules.

3. Mute yourself if you are not speaking.
4. If you are online, you will see a picture or name of each person in your hearing on your screen. The first one you see is the person who is speaking. Your hearing is live and audio will be recorded. Everyone there can hear what you say. It may even be open to the public.
5. The judge decides most cases at the end of the hearing.



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

More tips

- Don't eat, smoke or chew gum.
- Don't fidget or swivel in your chair.
- Have pen and paper handy to take notes.
- Have the phone number for the court ready in case your connection fails.
- If you have a lawyer, discuss your hearing ahead of time.
- If you have a special need, such as the need for an interpreter, [contact the court](#) right away after learning of your remote hearing. Ask them in advance for help.

Contact the court



To find the phone number and email address to your court, visit www.vermontjudiciary.org and click on Find a Court.

The Vermont courts also have information about remote hearings with Webex: <https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/about-vermont-judiciary/participating-remote-hearings>

What if I need legal help?



For advice, contact us at 1-800-889-2047 or visit VTLawHelp.org.



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