

How to Use Zoom in Court

To conduct Court via Zoom, you will need a **desktop computer, laptop, or smartphone that is equipped with a camera and microphone and a stable internet connection**. If you do not have access to those devices, see **Call-In Options** at the bottom of this document. The instructions for attending a remote hearing are as follows:

Step 1: Install Zoom For Free

For **smartphones** and **tablets**, install ZOOM from the Play Store or App Store.

For your desktop computer, laptop, or notebook device with webcam and microphone, please visit www.zoom.us and follow the instructions to download the app.

Step 2: Create an Account

Create a Zoom account by going to Zoom.us, and click, "sign up, it's free" and follow the prompts from there. You will need to use your email address and create a password. You only need to do this one time; this is the account you will use each time you enter a Zoom virtual hearing.

You will need to obtain a premium (paid) membership to hold hearings without disruption. The maximum time limit for free accounts is 45 minutes per meeting.

You should test audio and video at least 24 hours before the conference. This can be done in the "Preferences" or "Settings" window of the program. You will also want to test the program to be sure that you have a strong WiFi connection. If your signal strength is too weak this may impact your ability to participate in the virtual hearing. If you are unable to participate by video, see the section titled "Call-In Options."

Step 3: Join the Zoom Call

Be sure to join the Zoom call 15 minutes before the start time.

To join, you will need to access the Zoom remote court session information, which includes the meeting ID and password. This information should be emailed to the participants prior to the hearing.

- Please take note of the Meeting ID and Password for that specific court session.

- A "Join Now" link to the hearing will be provided. Clicking on the Join Now link will open your Zoom app and may ask you to enter the Zoom session's meeting ID and password.
- After you enter the meeting ID and password, a screen should load showing your face, after you see this screen, click "**join with video.**"
- Once these above steps have been completed, you will have joined the Zoom session and be placed into the Zoom Waiting Room. (When in the Waiting Room, you cannot hear or see the court proceedings.)
- The name that you choose for yourself will be shown on the screen during the call. You **must** use your full name as it appears in your case and your case number so that you can be identified. If you fail to do so, you may not be admitted into the proceeding from the Waiting Room.
- When the court is ready to hear your case, you will be allowed entry into the Zoom meeting from the Waiting Room.
- A message box will then appear asking you to "**join with computer audio,**" or "**join with internet audio.**" Selecting this will allow you to hear the meeting and speak through your device.
- Mute all sounds from other applications when videoconferencing (i.e., email notifications, chat messaging, etc.).
 - If the programs do not allow for muting, then close the application completely.
 - Avoid using a mobile device for video. While tablets (iPads) and smartphones can be used, their platform functionality is limited, and the video performance is inferior.

If using a laptop, avoid using battery power only. Plug into a suitable power source while in a meeting. (Videoconferencing tasks are intensive functions for your computer and will drain power faster.)

- Avoid running any unnecessary applications besides Zoom (or other videoconferencing platform), to conserve your computer's processing power and networking.
- Restart your computer every day and before every new hearing. This refreshes your computer's memory and allows the new meeting to run smoothly.
- Avoid using an open microphone and speakers, such as those that are built into laptops or webcams. Using a good quality headset (headphones with a microphone) will often help ensure you can be heard and can hear others with maximum quality.
- Avoid distracting real or virtual backgrounds.
- Avoid poor camera positioning. Try to frame yourself so you take up most of the screen at eye level.
- For trial calendars, parties should be instructed to disable audio and video until the judge calls their case. This limits the potential distraction for others participating in the proceeding.
- If the parties are unwilling or unable to do it themselves, instructions are included below that allows the judge or their staff attorney to turn off those functions for participants manually.
- Avoid using WiFi. Connection via a hardwire Ethernet cable will always be faster and more reliable than WiFi. If you must use WiFi, make sure you are close to the router. Avoid sharing your internet service with others during the session. (i.e., others in the household watching Netflix or other video streaming platforms.)

Tips:

- Do not join the Zoom meeting while in a moving vehicle. Internet connectivity may affect your Zoom connection.
- You may join the Zoom court session if you join before the host is ready to start the session. **Please do not leave the meeting;** once the host begins the session, you will be placed into the Waiting Room

- Join the Zoom Court Session 15 minutes before the scheduled time. If you arrive late, you will end up waiting longer in the Waiting Room.
- When you are admitted from the Waiting Room, you should mute yourself by clicking on the microphone icon. A red line through the microphone indicates that you are muted and cannot be heard by the people in the meeting. When it is your turn to speak, you will need to unmute yourself by clicking the microphone.
- If you have not previously clicked on the "Join by Video" button, you may click on "start video" after joining the meeting so that others can see you. If the "start video" icon on the bottom left corner has a red line through it, that means that no one else can see you.