

Remote Hearing Checklist

Scheduling remote proceedings:

- Schedule the court proceeding either using a unique Zoom Meeting or a Personal Meeting Room (suggested use only with trusted participants).
 - Remember to adjust calendaring practices to ensure sufficient time for each case. Remote hearings may take longer than in-person hearings for a variety of reasons including participants being unfamiliar with the technology, login issues, and poor internet connectivity.
 - The “Topic” line for your hearing should be recognizable to the parties without including sensitive information.
 - In addition to using the Waiting Room, consider using a passcode for your meeting as an added level of security for the hearing. Do not include Zoom Meeting ID Numbers or passcodes in published dockets.
- Email notice of the hearing with the Zoom Meeting ID or Personal Meeting Room ID and login information only to the participants.
 - For public access, the hearing should be viewed on the court’s YouTube Channel.

Starting your hearing:

- Sign into the Court Zoom account prior to your hearing and check that your default settings are appropriately set.
 - Make sure to remove filters and change Zoom backgrounds, if needed.
 - If not using a Zoom background, be mindful of what is behind you on camera. Choose a solid neutral wall, if possible.
 - OCA has a Judicial Background available for use by Texas Judges.
 - Test your audio and video before starting your Zoom meeting.
 - Position your camera at eye level or slightly above eye level.
 - Check the lighting. Ideally, position a lamp or sit facing a window, where light is directly on your face.
 - Note whether an interpreter will be participating in the hearing.
- Start the meeting in Zoom, admit all hearing participants, and verify that they are properly connected.
 - When speaking, remember to look directly at your camera.
 - Once your meeting has started, make sure to “Go Live” on your Court’s YouTube channel so that it is available for viewing by the public.
 - Procedures for limiting public access via Livestream are available on the OCA Livestream Bench Card.
- Begin the formal part of the hearing.
 - Verbally state the case number and title;
 - Verbally state the start time of the hearing;
 - Ask for party announcements and require participants to spell their names for the record;
 - Remind participants to pause before they begin to speak in case there is any audio/video lag and to speak slowly, clearly, and one at a time.
 - Encourage participants to mute themselves when they are not speaking in order to avoid any potential background noise.
 - Admonish participants and viewers that recording court proceedings is not permitted and can be enforced with contempt.
 - If the Rule has been invoked, admonish any witnesses, including an instruction that they are not to log on to the Court’s YouTube channel to watch the proceeding.

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continued

Conducting the hearing:

- Throughout the hearing, the meeting host (the court) will use in-meeting controls to manage logistics of the hearing such as muting and unmuting participants, bringing in and sending participants and witnesses to the waiting room, and managing breakout rooms.
 - Be cognizant of maintaining order and decorum throughout the proceeding.
 - Stop the testimony immediately upon noticing that a participant has left the meeting to determine if there are any connectivity issues and to assist with getting them back into the hearing.
 - Be mindful that due to varying internet speeds and other potential lag issues, objections may be slightly delayed. Stop testimony as soon as practicable upon hearing an objection.

Ending the hearing:

- Make all necessary findings on the record and announce upcoming statutory hearing dates.
- Conclude and state the end time of the hearing.
- If using a Personal Meeting Room, ask participants to leave the meeting when the proceeding is over; if using the schedule meeting function, the host should end the meeting for all participants. This should also stop the YouTube livestream.
 - If you do not want your court hearings to be archived on your YouTube page, you may delete the video after livestreaming. There is also an option to keep your video recordings archived without making them available for viewing on your page.

Additional Resources:

- The Office of Court Administration (OCA): Zoom Information and YouTube Support
- State Bar of Texas: Zoom and Videoconferencing Resources National Center for State Courts: Conducting Fair and Just Remote Hearings Bench Guide