

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 the 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 visible behind you when you are 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 so that 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 giving 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](#)