

Remote Hearings Decorum Tips for Attorneys

As officers of the court, attorneys have an important role in modeling and following remote hearings decorum expectations. Remote appearances are court appearances and [all existing rules of courtroom decorum](#) for lawyers and clients apply, like standards of professionalism in advocacy, decorum, respect, dress, speech, and manner. Attorneys are also responsible for clients' conduct in remote hearings, just as they are for clients appearing in person. Clients must know that courtroom rules apply in all respects to remote appearances. They must be able to access and manage the remote hearing technology, with attorney assistance.

These decorum tips will keep the focus on the facts of your client's case and not on distracting behavior or surroundings. You'll also find answers to commonly asked questions.

Helpful Tips

Be Prepared

It is the attorney's responsibility to be able to access and manage remote hearing technology. Test the device(s) you and your client will use for your remote hearing. Ensure that all devices have a good and consistent internet connection. If your client is participating in a location other than with you, make sure they have the Zoom link as well as copies of any exhibits. Check that your client knows how to interact with you during a hearing if you are participating separately.

In preparing for your remote hearing, you will need to know:

- How to turn off and on your video
- How to mute and unmute your audio
- How to rename yourself in Zoom to show your name
- How to apply a virtual background (if your background may be distracting)
- How to use screen sharing
- How to share [evidence electronically using the Minnesota Digital Exhibit System \(MNDES\)](#)
- How to join a breakout room
- How to raise your hand virtually

Do NOT record the court hearing. Everything said will be captured and made part of the official court record. No other recording is allowed.



You can find instructions and join a test Zoom hearing on the [Remote Hearing Information](#) Help Topic of the MJB website by clicking on **Join a Court Hearing Using Zoom**.

Minimize Distractions

Prevent interruptions and distractions by connecting from a private location where you can shut the door. Turn off any background noise such as TVs, music, and phone notifications. During your hearing, ensure that you and your client stay in one place when your cameras are on and set in a fixed location.

Present Yourself Professionally

- Dress in the same professional attire that you would for an in-person hearing.
- Give the hearing your full attention by not eating, chewing gum, smoking or vaping, drinking alcohol, sleeping, or using other devices, such as phones, during your hearing.
- Speak slowly and clearly so the court reporter can capture an accurate court record. If possible, use a headset for better speaking clarity and volume.
- Use Zoom's Raise Hand feature if you need to get the judge's attention, but avoid using other reactions/emojis

Frequently Asked Questions and Resources

What if I want to request that a hearing be held in person or remotely?

The Minnesota Judicial Branch adopted a district court hearing framework in [July 2024](#) that aims to bring statewide consistency to how district courts hold hearings, while respecting judicial discretion and providing local flexibility. Information about the default hearing appearance types are in the [Remote and In-Person Hearings Policy](#) and Judicial Council approved deviations for [criminal](#), [non-criminal](#), and [juvenile delinquency](#) cases are on the Minnesota Judicial Branch website's [Going to Court](#) Help Topic. The hearing notice will state whether you are to appear in person or remotely.

If you or your client wish to appear remotely for an in-person hearing or appear in person for a remote hearing, file a [request](#) or contact the [court](#). A request should be filed with the court as soon as possible before the hearing, and it will be up to the judicial officer to determine whether to grant the request. The form and instructions are found on the [Minnesota Judicial Branch website](#) in the "Other" category on the Get Forms tab.

What if someone does not follow court decorum?

If anyone is being intentionally noisy, distracting, or disrespectful during a remote hearing, they may be muted or moved to a virtual waiting room. If the behavior continues, the judge is likely to reschedule their hearing. Especially bad behavior may result in sanctions.

What resources are available for my client to understand decorum expectations during their remote hearing better?

Written and video decorum guides for litigants, called Preparing for Your Remote Hearings, are available on the Minnesota Judicial Branch website. These resources are posted on two Help Topics:

- In the [Going to Court](#) Help Topic, on the Tools and Resources tab, and
- In the [Remote Hearing](#) Help Topic, on the Best Practices for Remote Hearings tab.

These resources provide general expectations for litigants on remote hearing preparedness, dress, and behavior. Individual courts may have additional expectations for your client's hearing which will be shared with you and your client beforehand.

What happens if I have a technical issue with Zoom?

The [Zoom Support Center](#) provides tutorials and other resources to help Zoom users address common technical issues they may encounter. If a technical issue prevents you or your client from participating in your remote hearing, please contact court administration where the case is being heard as soon as possible. You can find contact information on the court's website under [Find Courts](#).

What if your client lacks access to a computer, tablet, smartphone, or high-speed internet?

The Minnesota Judicial Branch and the Legal Kiosk Project provide access to remote hearing kiosks throughout Minnesota. You can request access to a courthouse kiosk from the Branch by contacting your local court. You can find contact information on the court's website under [Find Courts](#). The Legal Kiosk Project also provides access to over 250 kiosks in a variety of [community locations](#). Users can use the kiosks to access civil legal aid services, legal resources, and, in some cases, online meetings and remote court hearings in privacy.

If I have questions or concerns, who can I reach out to?

Court staff and judges understand that some circumstances are out of your control and are not a sign of disrespect. Reach out to court administration where the case is being heard to discuss your concerns about your hearing. You can find contact information on the court's website under [Find Courts](#). You may also ask the judge at the time of your hearing.