

How can I prepare for a remote hearing?

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to many court hearings being done remotely. Inform yourself on how you can prepare for one.

What is a remote hearing?

A **'remote hearing'** is a court hearing that is being done remotely. This means that the people involved will not go to court in person. Instead, you'll have the hearing over the phone or through a video-conferencing software (eg. Microsoft Teams, Zoom...etc).

A remote hearing is **exactly the same as an in-person hearing**, except it's done remotely.

The court decides if the hearing will be done remotely or not. If you think a remote hearing is not suitable, you need to inform the court (see below).

The court will send you a letter called a **'Hearing Notice'** or a **'Joining Notice'** to inform you of your hearing and whether it will be done remotely.

Remember – you'll probably need to respond to this Notice. Give them your contact details when you do.

Where can I find information on my hearing?

Information on your hearing will be on the **Hearing Notice or Joining Notice**. This includes:

- The date and time of the hearing
- The parties attending
- The judge's name
- Instructions on what you need to do and when (called 'directions')

The court should tell you **at least 3 days** before the remote hearing if it will be done over the phone or video. If you haven't been informed of this, **contact the court** (use the contact details in the Notice).

What do I need to do before my remote hearing?

1. Check if the remote hearing is suitable for you
2. Inform the court if you have any witnesses, need support or an interpreter

3. Make sure the court has your correct contact details (eg. phone number, email address...)
4. Prepare your bundle and send it to the court
5. Prepare yourself for the day of the remote hearing

Is having a remote hearing suitable for me?

Having a remote hearing **may** not be suitable for you, if one or more of the following apply:

- You don't have access to a private computer, tablet or smartphone with a webcam
- You don't have internet access at home
- Your internet connection is not stable or extremely slow, so it would be difficult for you to hear and see on a video call
- You won't have a quiet space in which to "attend" the hearing
- You have a medical condition or disability making it difficult to access a telephone or video remote hearing
- You need someone to accompany you (to help you understand what is happening during the hearing or for emotional support)
- You speak English as an additional language and may need an interpreter
- Even with support, a remote hearing would make you very anxious

If any of the above apply, **contact the court as soon as possible** using the contact details they provided in the Notice.

The court may be able to arrange a 'hybrid' hearing (partly remotely), a different way to have a remote hearing, or postpone the hearing.

What is a 'bundle' and how do I prepare one?

The documents to be used in the hearing (called 'the bundle') need to be sent to the court and all other parties before the hearing.

If you're bringing the claim, application or appeal, it's usually **your responsibility to put together this bundle and make sure all parties and the judge have it.**

To prepare the bundle, look at the instructions that the Court has given you. They may want the bundle to be formatted in a very specific way (e.g. in a pdf document instead of a Word document). The Notice will tell you when and how you need to send it.

If you're struggling with this, ask the court for support.

How can I prepare myself for the day of the remote hearing?

Consider doing the following:

- Prepare a 'quiet' room that you'll use during the remote hearing
- Download and familiarise yourself with the video conferencing software (if needed)
- Find smart clothes to wear during the hearing
- Prepare a glass of water, a pen and paper to have with you during the hearing
- Arrange a way to contact anyone who is supporting you, your interpreter, or representative during the hearing (you won't be able to do this through the video conferencing software)
- If you want to swear an oath on a holy book or scripture, have a copy of your holy book available
- Prepare an extra screen/tablet or/and headphones (if needed)
- Turn off any call-barring services (if needed)
- Put your phone on silent or silent vibrate during the hearing

Further resources

Please read our guide that provides further information and tips on remote hearings. We also have a checklist to help you prepare for remote hearings and a checklist for video remote hearings.

You can download these documents here:

https://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/know-your-rights/?_resource_category=civil

Link to GOV.UK guidance on remote hearings:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-to-expect-when-joining-a-telephone-or-video-hearing>

Organisations

Support through Court

<https://www.supportthroughcourt.org/>

Volunteers provide assistance for anyone going to court by providing emotional and administrative assistance. They can't represent you in court.

Support Through Court can help you in remote hearings in family and civil courts, see information here:

<https://www.supportthroughcourt.org/get-help/support-at-remote-hearings/>

Toynbee Hall's Free Legal Advice Centre

If you need free one-off legal advice, you can fill in this form by Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC) of Toynbee Hall:

<https://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/free-advice/legal-advice/#online-flac-ia-form> or you can email FLAC here: flac@toynbeehall.org.uk

Please know that we do not offer representation or do case work. We provide advice on housing, employment, immigration, consumer, civil matters and more.

If you want to find other free legal clinics or you need representation, please look at LawWorks here: <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/legal-advice-individuals>

For more written resources and videos on different legal issues, including co-parenting, domestic abuse, rent arrears, go to our website:

<https://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/know-your-rights/>

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