

A JUROR'S GUIDE TO WASHINGTON'S COURTS

Welcome to jury service. We appreciate your willingness to serve!

Your job as a juror is to listen to all the evidence presented at trial, then decide the facts. The judge's job is to decide the law, or make decisions on legal issues that come up during the trial. Everyone has to do their job well if our system is to work.

You don't need special knowledge or ability to do your job – and there is no homework. It is enough that you keep an open mind, use common sense, concentrate on the evidence presented, and be fair and honest in your deliberations.

You must base your decision solely on the evidence and not on sympathy or prejudice. It is critical that you begin your service unbiased toward any party, lawyer, or witness and that you keep an open mind until you have heard all the evidence and begin jury deliberations.

If you need additional information, the contact information for local courts can be found at http://www.courts.wa.gov/court_dir/

Prepared by the Washington Pattern Jury Instruction Committee in conjunction with the Washington State Superior Court Judges' Association and the District and Municipal Court Judges' Association

THE DANGERS OF OUTSIDE INFORMATION

A trial can only be fair if your decisions are based entirely on the information you receive in the courtroom, not on outside information. We therefore ask that you take the following rules seriously.

Do Not Talk To Anyone Or Let Anyone Talk To You About The Case

Do not discuss any aspect of the case with **anyone** until the trial is concluded. This includes your family and friends. Also, do not discuss the case with the other jurors until your deliberations begin. **This helps you to keep an open mind until the end of the case.**

Do Not Receive Or Send Electronic Communications About The Case

This includes texting, emailing, blogging, tweeting, posting information on social network websites, or using any other electronic communications to discuss, or even mention, this case.

Do Not Conduct Internet Research

Do not use the internet to seek information about any aspect of the case.

Avoid News Reports About The Case

If you are accidentally exposed to information about the case or its subject matter, please report it to court staff without sharing the information with your fellow jurors.

Do Not Try To Uncover Evidence On Your Own

Never, for example, go to locations that were part of the case you are hearing. Do not do research about any issue related to the case. For example, even checking a dictionary for the

meaning of a word, using the internet to look at a map location, or reading an online encyclopedia for background information is not allowed.

Violation Of These Rules Is Serious!

It could result in a mistrial (starting the trial all over again) and you being found in of contempt of court.

SOME OTHER DO'S AND DON'TS

Do arrive on time and **do** return promptly after breaks and lunch. The trial cannot proceed until all jurors are present.

Do pay close attention. If you cannot hear what is being said, raise your hand and let the judge know.

Do keep an open mind all through the trial.

Do listen carefully to the instructions read by the judge. Remember, it is your duty to accept what the judge says about the law to be applied to the case.

Don't try to guess what the judge thinks about the case. Remember that rulings from the bench do not reflect the judge's personal views.

Don't talk to the lawyers, parties, or witnesses about *anything*. This will avoid the impression that something unfair is going on.

DURING DELIBERATIONS

Do work out differences between yourself and other jurors through complete and fair discussions of the evidence and the judge's instructions.

Don't lose your temper, try to bully, or refuse to listen to opinions of the other jurors.

Don't mark or write on exhibits or otherwise change them.

Don't draw straws, flip coins, or otherwise arrive at your verdict by chance, or the decision will be illegal.

Don't talk to anyone about the case until you are **discharged**. After discharge, you may discuss the verdict, but **don't** feel obligated to do so.

Don't use electronic devices during deliberations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How was I chosen?

Your name was selected randomly from voter registration, driver's license and "identocard" records, and your juror questionnaire answers were reviewed to ensure you were eligible for jury service. In short, you were chosen because you are eligible and able to serve. You are now part of the "jury pool" -- a group of citizens from which trial juries are chosen.

What's next?

The judge will tell you about the case and introduce the lawyers and others involved. You will take an oath promising to answer all questions truthfully. After you're sworn in, the judge and lawyers will ask questions to find out if you have any knowledge about the case, personal interest in it, or feelings that might make it hard for you to be impartial.

How long will I serve?

It depends. Court rules vary as to how many days you may be required to appear for jury selection. If you are placed on a jury, you will serve until the trial is done. Trials can vary from one day to several weeks. The judge will inform you as to the expected length of the trial. There will be times you are required to wait both before and after being placed on a jury while the judge and lawyers address issues not heard by the jury. You may wish to bring something to occupy your time when this happens. We appreciate your patience.

What should I wear?

Dress comfortably. Suits, ties, or other formal wear are not necessary. But don't get *too* informal -- beach wear, shorts, halter or tank tops are *not* appropriate in court. Hats are not allowed unless worn for religious or medical reasons.

If I have a disability...

We are committed to making jury service accessible. For disability accommodation, contact the jury administrator or a member of the court staff.

What about my job?

Employers must provide a sufficient leave of absence from employment when an employee is summoned for jury duty. Employers may not deprive an employee of employment or threaten, coerce, or harass an employee or deny an employee promotional opportunities for serving as a juror. The law does *not* require your employer to pay you while you serve.

What if I have an emergency?

Because your absence could delay the trial, you must be present for each trial day. If a real emergency occurs -- a sudden illness, accident or death in the family -- call or email the designated court staff immediately.

What types of cases may I hear?

Civil cases

Civil cases are disputes between private citizens, corporations, governments, government agencies or other organizations. Usually, the party that brings the suit is asking for money damages for an alleged wrong. For example, a person who has been injured may sue the person or company believed responsible for the injury. The party who brings suit is the *plaintiff*; the party being sued is the *defendant*.

Criminal Cases

A criminal case is brought by the state or a city or county against one or more persons accused of committing a crime. In these cases, the state, city or county is the *plaintiff*; the accused person is the *defendant*.