

Yolo Superior Court, Virtual Courtroom

Rules and Responsibilities

In response to the COVID-19 state of emergency and to provide access to the Court under shelter in place orders, Yolo Superior Court has moved to virtual court. The virtual courtroom, under the supervision of the Judge presiding, has the authority to exclude persons who fail to comply.

1. **Be on time**

Please ensure all equipment is fully tested in advance so that you are ready when court starts. Yolo Superior Court is not responsible to provide technical assistance.

For detailed audio/video guidelines and troubleshooting: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362283-Testing-computer-or-device-audio>

If you experience echo-specific problems with your audio connection:
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/202050538-Audio-Echo-In-A-Meeting>

2. **Properly introduce yourself**

When signing onto the virtual courtroom, please type your full name so that you can be properly identified.

Example: First Name, Last Name (Agency)

Agency: DA = District Attorney, PD = Public Defender, CC = County Counsel, PATTNY = Plaintiff/Petitioner Attorney, DATNY = Defendant/Respondent Attorney, PP (Pro-per).

Witness: First Name, Last Name (witness for _____)

If you make a mistake or are asked to fix your name, click on the *Participants* icon at the bottom of the Zoom window; hover over your name; click *More*; select *Rename*.

3. **Frame the camera correctly**

When you're on video make sure to:

- a. Frame your camera in a way that feels natural and allows you to look directly at the camera.
- b. Choose a spot where the background is courtroom appropriate and with no bright lights behind you.
- c. Always speak into the computer microphone and do not get up and walk around during hearings.
- d. Turn your camera off unless actively participating to the hearing, this will reduce the number of concurrent participants on the screen.

4. **Wear Court-appropriate attire**

All persons who appear in any virtual courtroom shall dress appropriately as if they were appearing in person in a traditional courtroom setup. The following shall not be worn while appearing via Zoom: sunglasses, hats, tank tops, or any other attire inconsistent with the traditional dignity of the court.

5. **Mute yourself when not speaking**

Even though you may not be speaking and think you are being quiet, most microphones (including phones) can pick up minor background noises, like coughs, sneezes, paper handling, or typing. These sounds can easily distract other participants, including the court reporter who might not be able to properly transcribe the proceeding.

Note: by default, Zoom V-Courtrooms are set to mute all participants on entry.

6. **Let everybody know who is speaking**

In the virtual world it is very important that participants know who is talking. Please start speaking by **stating your name, and then speak slowly and as clearly as you can**. This will help the Judge, clerk, court reporter, and everyone else to understand what you are saying.

7. **No recording or broadcasting allowed**

Photographing, videotaping, televising, or otherwise recording any virtual court proceeding is prohibited unless a written request has been filed and approved by the Judge presiding at the proceeding prior to the commencement of the proceeding. No one may transmit, record, or take pictures in any portion of the Zoom session except as permitted by these rules and Rule 1.150 of the California Rules of Court.

8. **Evidence**

Each participant is responsible for sharing evidence during a virtual proceeding.

- a. **Digital evidence** (i.e. documents, audio/visual files) will be presented via Zoom's Share (<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362153-Sharing-your-screen>).

This feature allows user to share the entire screen or just a specific application. By using the second option, user can prevent others from seeing anything else on their computer.

Naming convention

Digital evidence files must be named and clearly identified:
EVIDENCE-XX.*ext*

Where

XX = evidence number

ext = file extension/type.

Examples

EVIDENCE-01.pdf EVIDENCE-04.jpg EVIDENCE-11.AVI

- b. **Physical evidence** shall be presented via the participants own webcam.

9. **Sidebar Conversations**

- a. **Remote participants**

In case 2 or more remote parties need to communicate directly, without others involved, the host can place those participants in a **Zoom Breakout Room**.

Breakout room participants have full audio, video, and screen share capabilities as they do in the main meeting. If defense counsel needs to speak privately to their client at the jail, a separate phone call will be necessary. For this purpose, the Sheriff has made available a desk phone.

b. **Non-remote participants**

If any of the sidebars involves a participant who is physically present in the courtroom, the off-the-record conversation cannot take place. All audio is fed through the courtroom A/V system, making it impossible to segment each party involved.

Note: this doesn't apply to counsel-jail communications, as the process was previously described.