

OCA Recommendations and Tips on Holding Zoom Virtual Hearings

OCA continues to provision licenses to courts for Zoom, and almost 1,050 judges are already registered. In the past week, judges have conducted almost 1,900 separate court proceedings through Zoom with nearly 14,000 participants. You can view many courts' livestreams by checking out our [YouTube Channel Directory](#). Once you submit the [request for a new account](#), you should receive an account in no more than 24 hours, as well as instructions on how to proceed with set up. To assist judges, clerks, and court staff with conducting remote proceedings, OCA has set up a [resource page](#) that is continuously being updated with resources.

IMPORTANT SETTING NEEDED FOR YOUTUBE CHANNELS: YouTube may block certain channels if the content is deemed inappropriate for children and the settings on the YouTube channel indicate that the content on the channel is "made for kids." All court YouTube channels should be set to "Not Made for Children." Instructions for ensuring this setting is properly made can be found [here](#).

Here are several recommendations & tips from judges who have been using Zoom for remote hearings:

1. Hardwired internet connection is better than wifi, if it's available to you.
2. Sign into [studio.youtube.com](#) from another device while you're streaming, and you can edit the streaming video description to include whatever admonishments you want. Keep the admonishments in a text file on your desktop (don't record, etc), and as soon as you start the stream, paste them into the description.
3. Add a "Do Not Record" Watermark to your YouTube channel. You can do this once, and it will automatically show up in all future livestreams. Instructions are available [here](#).
4. Witnesses need to be on their own devices in their own rooms. Sharing one microphone is not ideal because some devices will only transmit sound from one person and not the other person sitting right next to them. Also, two devices in the same room causes feedback, echoing, and screeching. Also, don't forget to admonish a witness who is moved out of the virtual courtroom under "the rule" not to view the livestream.
5. If witnesses cycle through a chair at a lawyer's office, for instance, you can rename by clicking on the Participant List, and clicking "rename."
6. Silence notifications on your computer. You need to have the volume up on your device to use Zoom, which means you need to silence Outlook or other notifications without muting everything. Go into Outlook and set mail notifications and calendar notifications to silent – it's two different settings inside Outlook...or just exit out of Outlook or the application causing the notifications.
7. At the creation of a meeting on Zoom, send the interpreter an email for Spanish language interpretation. That opens 2 channels, one in English and one in Spanish, and individuals are given the option of listening to the proceedings in English or Spanish. If you're having technical difficulties with the language interpretation features, 90% of the time it's because someone isn't on the right channel. There are 3 channels – English, Spanish, and Off. Somehow, people will end up on the "Off" channel and things won't work right. Fix it by telling everyone to make sure they're on either English or Spanish.
8. Breakout rooms are private – the main room can't hear what's said in the breakout room. Breakout room can't hear the main room. Participants know when you go into or out of a breakout room – there's no sneaking.

9. To publish an audio or video recording with sound: Share screen, select the video or audio window, and check the SHARE SOUND option on the bottom left of the share window.
10. Co-hosts: Add multiple staff members as 'co-hosts' to admit people from the waiting room, monitor screen activity, send offensive screens into the waiting room, mute and unmute people, etc.
11. Hit 'Mute All': When there is unwanted noise, sound, reverberations, or echoes, hit mute all and give people the option to unmute themselves. Sounds elementary, but we've seen several users not employ that option.
12. My introductory script: "Welcome to _____ Court. The time is now 9am. Court is now in session. The proceedings are official, on the record, and are being recorded. Counsel and all present are instructed to act as though you were in court; and all parties are instructed not to record these proceedings. Only the court reporter can provide the official record. If necessary, the Court will provide only the court reporter with the audio and/or video file – but only in the event that it is necessary and only to supplement her record in an unavoidable event such as loss of internet connection or poor audio quality. As with all proceedings, violation of these instructions are subject to contempt proceedings. Accordingly, please exercise proper courtroom decorum at all times."