

Twentieth Judicial Circuit-AOC

VIRTUAL COURTROOM ETIQUETTE

The courtroom, whether a physical in-person courtroom, or a virtual courtroom using telephone or video technology, remains a formal and serious setting where matters involving real people and real lives are heard. Every case is important, and all participants are asked to maintain court decorum in the virtual world, just as they would in person. We ask all individuals participating in Virtual Court proceedings to continue to observe the following well-established rules of court decorum:

1) Arrive on Time and Follow Virtual Platform Directions To minimize distractions during the court proceeding, log in a few minutes before the scheduled start time and follow the Zoom (or other virtual platform directions provided by your presiding judge and/or their staff. Identify yourself when in the virtual meeting with your real name, and if you are appearing by phone, please disclose your identity immediately upon inquiry.

2) Dress Appropriately for Court Business attire is always appropriate for court; sweatshirts, gym clothes, Hawaiian shirts, concert t-shirts, sports team jerseys and pajamas are never appropriate. Attorneys: while we understand you must juggle multiple roles while working from home, business casual (example, collared shirt with or without a tie or jacket for either gender) should be your minimum.

3) Eliminate Distractions Participating in Virtual Court proceedings often means working from home. Please try to locate a quiet area and minimize interruptions by others in the home. While we agree that your children and pets are adorable, their presence in the virtual courtroom distracts you, the Court, and other participants from the subject matter of the hearing. We recognize in the close quarters of the safer at home order that hermit-like quiet is not available to everyone, but please minimize distractions as much as possible.

Consider using a Zoom Virtual Background to eliminate visual distractions in the background. Put your cell phones and other technology in silent mode during the Virtual Court proceeding.

4) Do Not Speak out of turn or Interfere in testimony Just like an in-person court setting, the presiding judge will indicate when it's your turn to be heard. In order to prevent any accidental audio distractions, please mute your audio setting until it is your turn to speak. If another person is testifying, you may not suggest answers, make gestures, or otherwise coach a witness or a party from offcamera.

5) Be Courteous and Respectful to all Virtual Court Participants Use good manners; ensure that your physical and facial expressions are appropriate and uphold the dignity of a court setting. Ensure your language upholds the dignity of a court setting – no profanity.

6) Do Not Bring Food to the Virtual Courtroom This includes chewing gum. Coffee is fine, we all need coffee.

7) Do not Use Tobacco or Vaping Products in the Virtual Courtroom

8) Sit Up Straight Show the same courtesy the Court is showing you. Do not prop your feet up on a table or chair.

9) Additional Resource on Courtroom Etiquette: Florida Bar Guidelines for Professional Conduct – see Section L: Trial Conduct and Courtroom Decorum <https://www.floridabar.org/prof/presources/presources002/>

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VIRTUAL COURTROOM ETIQUETTE Cont.

10) Additional Resources on Video Conference Etiquette: Florida Bar Journal Article: “Maintaining Legal Decorum in the New Normal,” by Past Florida Bar President Eugene K. Pettis <https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-news/maintaining-legal-decorum-in-the-new-normal/> Zoom.us Blog – Video Meeting Etiquette <https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2019/11/27/video-meeting-etiquette-tips/>