



What is a Virtual Courtroom?

A Virtual Courtroom brings the physical courtroom to a virtual space. It is a digital method for court cases to be progressed without the need for participants to attend in person.

Parties to proceedings can access the Virtual Courtroom using video and telephone conferencing applications (see below).

Virtual courtrooms are still formal courtrooms. All usual court etiquette, protocols, procedures and restrictions apply.

How to use a Virtual Courtroom?

Parties can utilise the virtual courtroom avenue the following ways:

1. Video conference – via a dedicated *Web Link* or by using a dedicated video conferencing service or device.
2. Telephone conference – dialling into a dedicated Virtual Courtroom number.

Contact details for the Virtual Courtroom will be provided by the Court prior to your appearance date.

Instructions

Video conferencing using a 'Web Link'

(This facility is available to practitioners with laptop devices, iPads or mobile phones).

1. Ensure your device has a working camera. Video conferencing requires a camera to be enabled.
2. Ensure that your device has reliable connectivity and coverage.
3. If you are using a web browser to connect via the Web Link, please ensure your browser meets the following standards: Google Chrome (min. v.73), Mozilla Firefox (min. v.66). Please note it is NOT recommended to use either Internet Explorer (IE) or Microsoft Edge as these browsers do not support this particular software.
4. Click the *Web Link* provided immediately prior to your listed appearance time.
5. You will be asked to enter your name and details. Please use the following naming convention: *Surname – Party description* (Example: *Doe – Plaintiff* = representative John Doe – plaintiff's representative)

6. Click “Join Meeting”.

Video conferencing using a dedicated video conferencing service or facility.

(This facility is available to practitioners using dedicated video conferencing equipment that typically are available in many offices suites or facilities).

1. Use the SIP address provided to connect your video conferencing equipment to the Virtual Courtroom prior to your listed appearance time.

Telephone conferencing

1. Dial the phone number provided to you immediately prior to your listed appearance time.
2. You will be greeted by the following audio message:
“Welcome to NSW Courts”
3. Please note that at this point, you are ‘live’ in the Virtual Courtroom, all parties, including the Judge/Registrar can hear you, so please remain silent until your matter is called.
4. Whilst waiting for your matter to be called, please ensure that the audio on your device is muted so that no background noise can interfere with court proceedings.
5. End the call when your matter is finalised.

Tips/ General Rules/ Troubleshooting for the Virtual Courtroom experience

- *Be in a quiet and private location to limit interference from background noise.*
- *Ensure that there is sufficient internet coverage and connection on your device.*
- *Ensure all relevant materials to be relied upon have been made available to the Court beforehand.*
- *Observe all normal court etiquette and protocols in the Virtual Courtroom environment.*
- *Refrain from speaking over each other as much as practical to accommodate the reduced social cues available, and to assist with the court’s transcribing process (further tips provided below to assist the transcription service)*
- *If you experience difficulties accessing the Virtual Courtroom using the video conferencing facility, please note that the Court does not provide a technical support*

Assistance with the transcription service

- *Court participants must announce and spell their appearances.*
- *Court participants must speak into microphones and speak one at a time so that they can be understood.*
- *If court participants are appearing via video or telephone link, they must announce their appearance each time they speak into court*
- *Competing noises in courtrooms increases difficulty for monitors to hear and will impact the quality of the transcript such as typing near microphones or shuffling of papers and coughing into microphones. Try to keep those types of noises to a minimum.*
- *In courtrooms where there are multiple rows of bar tables and counsel seat themselves in the back rows and speak, try to speak into the microphone and or sit towards the front rows as much as they can.*
- *If you can't hear what is being said in court, the court monitor cannot hear it either.*

Frequently Asked Questions

Can several participants use the same device to attend a Virtual Courtroom? (E.g. witnesses in the legal representative's office)

No. Legal representatives and supporting witnesses must use separate devices, and be in a different physical space when attending Virtual Courtroom. If multiple participants want to connect to the Virtual Courtroom at the same time, consider the use of a dedicated video conferencing suite.

Can I still attend court in-person?

Yes. Virtual Courts are simply an alternative to physical court spaces. Pending further advice, you can still attend the NSW Supreme Court courtrooms in person.

Can non-related parties (e.g. junior clerks) join the telephone/video conference to observe?

The usual concept of open justice is applicable to the Virtual Courtrooms. However, the Court discourages the wide sharing of Virtual Courtroom contact information in order to minimise interruptions in the Virtual Courtroom environment.

In all cases, normal court protocols, etiquettes, procedures and restrictions apply. The public must put their calls on mute and silently observe so no background noise can interfere with court proceedings.