

HOW TO GET READY FOR YOUR TRIAL

What happens in a trial

- Each side makes an opening statement. An opening statement is an overview about what you are asking the court to do and what evidence you expect to show the court.
- Each side takes turns presenting their case. The petitioner presents their case first. They may call witnesses and move to admit exhibits. After the petitioner is finished (rests), the respondent presents their case. They may also call witnesses and move to admit exhibits.
- Each side makes a closing statement. A closing statement explains why the judge should rule in your favor and what evidence supports your proposal.
- The judge makes a decision and signs final orders. Sometimes the final orders can be signed the same day, and sometimes the judge needs time to review the exhibits and make a decision.

A Trial is different from a temporary order hearing

- Witnesses must be present in person (or by Zoom)
- All evidence must be marked by the clerk and presented to the judge in the courtroom.
- Decisions after trial are final

How to subpoena your witnesses

- If you are not a lawyer, a judge must approve and sign your subpoena
- Serve the subpoena on your witnesses
- If witnesses are willing to testify without a subpoena, you may invite them informally

How to present evidence

- Bring documents (like paystubs, photos, or tax records) to the courtroom. Bring at least 3 copies (one for you, one for the opposing side, and one for the court). Show them to the clerk so they can be labeled (marked). Give a copy to the opposing side.
- Tell the judge you would like to admit the document. Be prepared to explain why it is relevant and authentic. The judge will make a decision about whether the rules of evidence allow the document to be considered.
- Notebooks can help keep your exhibits organized.

If anyone needs to appear by Zoom

- Contact the court administrator at 509-574-2710 to find out if Zoom appearance is possible for your case.
- Make sure you and your witnesses know how to use Zoom and have the access codes.
- Make sure you and your witnesses are in a quiet place with an adequate Internet connection.
- If Zoom appearance is allowed, deliver all your proposed exhibits to the court and the opposing party ahead of time before your trial.

Check www.washingtonlaw.help for more legal information about how to get ready for your trial.