

Alaska Trial Jury Handbook



Alaska Court System

July 2022

Jury Services Website: <https://courts.alaska.gov/jury>

Statutes and Rules on Juries and Jury Procedure

Alaska Statutes:

AS 09.20.010 - .100	Juror Qualifications, Exemption, Selection, etc.
AS 09.55.020 - .040	Presumptive Death Jury
AS 09.55.064 - .069	Inquest Jury
AS 12.45.010	Criminal Trial Jury Formation
AS 12.45.018	Juror Counseling
AS 22.15.150	Size of Jury in District Court

Alaska Rules of Court:

Administrative Rules 14 and 15

Civil Rules 38, 39, 47, 48, 49, and 51

Criminal Rules 23, 24, 27, 30, and 31

Administrative Bulletins:

Bulletin 25 Jury Records

Bulletin 66 Jury Fees

Bulletin 66.1 Lodging & Meals for Jurors

**Bulletin 66.2 Jury Services – Clerks’ Authority to Defer
and Excuse Jurors**

See related provisions of the U.S. and Alaska Constitutions on the last page (inside back cover of printed booklet).

INTRODUCTION

Your call to jury service is a call to a most important task. If you are selected to be a juror, you will be asked to hear evidence presented at a trial, decide the facts, apply to the facts the law explained to you by the judge, and return a verdict. The case you hear may be a criminal case, civil case, or a coroner matter.

A **criminal case** is an action in which a defendant is accused by the government (the state or a city) of having committed a crime.

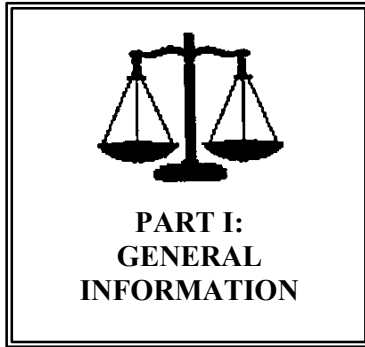
A **civil case** is an action to enforce private rights. It is a lawsuit involving either (a) one private party suing another private party, or (b) a private party suing or being sued by the government (other than in a criminal case). The controversy could be about property rights, claims for damages, or matters generally dealing with money.

There are two types of **coroner matters**: inquests and presumptive death hearings. **Inquests** determine the cause and manner of a person's death (for example, homicide, suicide, accident, etc.). **Presumptive death hearings** determine if a missing person should be declared dead. These coroner hearings are not trials. Therefore, the jury selection and trial procedures described in this handbook do not apply to coroner hearings.

As a juror, you are providing an important public service. You are also helping to uphold an essential part of the American system of justice — the right to a trial by a jury made up of persons representing a fair cross section of the community. The right to trial by jury is guaranteed by both the United States Constitution and the Alaska Constitution.

You do not need any special skills or knowledge to be a juror, but you do need to be fair, impartial, and willing to keep an open mind.

Thank you for the service you are providing.



How was I chosen for jury service?

Potential jurors are selected randomly by a computer from the list of all adults (18 years of age and older) who apply for the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend.



Do I have to respond to the summons?

Yes. The summons to jury service is an official court summons. If you do not respond, you could be held in contempt of court.



What is the purpose of the Jury Questionnaire?

The information you provide on the questionnaire helps the court determine whether you qualify to serve as a juror. The Alaska Statutes require jurors to be

- (1) citizens of the United States;
- (2) residents of Alaska;
- (3) at least 18 years of age;
- (4) of sound mind;
- (5) in possession of their natural faculties (normal abilities to reason);
and
- (6) able to read or speak the English language.

In addition, a person is disqualified from serving as a juror if the person has been convicted of a felony and has not been unconditionally discharged for that offense (meaning the person is still in jail, on electronic monitoring, or on parole or probation for the offense).

The questionnaire also gives you an opportunity to request that your jury duty be postponed as explained later in this handbook.



If I have difficulty hearing or seeing or have another disability, will I be disqualified from jury service?

No. A person is not disqualified from serving as a juror solely because of the loss of hearing or sight in any degree or a disability that substantially impairs or interferes with the person's mobility. The court is required to provide an interpreter or reader when necessary to enable a person with impaired hearing or sight to act as a juror. The court is also required to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you need any assistance because of a disability, you should immediately notify the jury clerk.

If jury service would be a significant hardship because of your disability, you can ask to be temporarily or permanently excused as explained in the paragraphs below.



Can I postpone my jury service?

It depends on which court you are doing jury service in. If you are serving in a court that has service terms of one year, then you cannot postpone.

If you are in a court with multiple terms of jury service during the year, and if jury service at the time for which you are summoned will cause hardship, you may request deferral of service to another time within the next ten months. If you need a deferral, ask for one as soon as possible. Do not wait until the time you are scheduled to appear. To reschedule your jury service, select a new term of service when asked if you wish to reschedule your service on the Jury Questionnaire. If you have already sent in your questionnaire, call the jury clerk as soon as possible for instructions.



Can I be temporarily excused from jury service?

The Alaska Statutes and court rules allow the following persons to be temporarily excused from jury service:

- (1) judicial officers;
- (2) persons who can show that their health, the health or proper care of their family, a physical or mental disability, or other hardship makes it necessary for them to be excused; and
- (3) teachers in a school that is designated as a low performing school under regulations adopted by the state Board of Education and Early Development. “Teacher” means a person who serves a school district in a teaching capacity in a classroom setting and is required to be certificated in order to hold the position. These teachers are only excused from jury service during the school term.

To request a temporary excusal, you must write your request and reason on the Jury Questionnaire, in the Comments section. If you have already sent in your questionnaire, call the jury clerk as soon as possible.

If your request is granted, you will be excused from service for one year (except the teachers described above, who are only excused during the school term). However, you may be summoned for another term of service in the future. To be permanently excused, see the next question.



Can I be permanently excused from jury service?

The court rules provide that you may be permanently excused from all jury service if you:

- (1) are 70 years of age or older and request in writing to be permanently excused; or
- (2) have a permanent medical reason you are unable to serve and provide written verification as described below.

To request a permanent excusal if you are 70 years of age or older, answer “yes” to the permanent excuse question on the Jury Questionnaire.

To request a permanent excusal if you have a permanent physical or mental disability, you must

- (a) answer “yes” to the question “I have a mental or physical reason that prevents me from serving”;
- (b) explain in the comments section of the questionnaire that you are requesting a permanent excusal; and
- (c) provide in writing, on business stationery or a prescription pad from a medical professional (licensed physician, psychologist, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, or chiropractor), that you are permanently unable to serve as a juror for medical reasons.

If you are permanently excused, you should not receive any further jury summonses.



What about my job?

Your employer cannot fire, demote, or otherwise penalize you for missing work while performing jury service. Some employers will continue to pay your salary while you are in jury service even though they are not required to do so. Contact your employer to find out what the policy is at your job.



What if my employer wants proof of my jury service?

Ask the jury clerk for a Certificate of Jury Attendance either at the end of each day of trial or at the completion of the trial. The certificate will indicate the dates and times you served.



Will I be paid for jury service?

You will be paid \$50 per day, starting with the second day you report to the courthouse during your period of jury service. There is no payment for the first day you are summoned to the courthouse.

Exception: State employees are not paid for jury service (unless they serve on days that they are not scheduled to work for the state).

You will also be reimbursed for mileage (at the rate paid to state employees) if you live more than 30 miles from the court. If you must fly or use the Marine Highway System, the court will make those arrangements for you.



When will I get paid?

Jury pay is processed twice each month. The first pay period is the 1st to the 15th and the second is the 16th through the end of each month. You can expect to receive your check about 15 days after the end of the pay period in which you served. If you serve during two pay periods, you will receive two checks. If you have not received your check within 15 days after the end of your pay period, please contact the jury clerk.



If my check is lost, can it be reissued?

If the check is less than six months old, contact the Administrative Jury Office in Anchorage at (907) 264-8268. The clerk will be able to re-issue the check for you.

If the check is more than six months old, the court system cannot re-issue it, and if you find it, you will not be able to cash it. After six months, the funds are automatically transferred to the State's Unclaimed Property Division. To request payment, call (907) 465-3726 or e-mail ucproperty@alaska.gov. Website: <https://unclaimedproperty.alaska.gov/>.



Does the court pay for meals for jurors?

The court does **not** pay for juror meals during the jury selection process or during the trial (unless the jury is sequestered). However, the court does pay for juror meals while the jury is deliberating (that is, after all the evidence has been presented and the judge has referred the case to the jury for decision).



Does the court provide parking?

Free parking is available at most courts. If parking is an issue, there will be instructions about it on your service reminder notice and on the Jury Services website: <https://courts.alaska.gov/jury/> (under the Parking Information & Contacts link).



How long must I serve?

The time period during which you must be **available** to serve (called your "term of service") depends on the size of the court location where you serve. During your term of service, you may have to call in or report to court periodically. You may not have to call in every day, but you must call on the days you are directed to do so.

In Anchorage, where the population is large and many trials are held each day, the term of service is either 5 consecutive days or, if you are selected to serve on a jury, the length of the trial.

The term of service in other court locations depends on the population in the area and can range from one week to a full year.



After I complete my term of service, will I get a break from future jury service?

Yes, but only if you had to appear in court during your term of service.

Once your term of service is complete, you cannot be required to serve again for at least one year after your last day of actual court appearance (or two years after that date in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Palmer).

You will **not** get the one year off if you

- (1) called in, but did not have to come to court;
- (2) never appeared in court, even though directed to appear; or
- (3) came to court when you were **not** instructed to do so, and your service was not needed.



What if an emergency keeps me from coming to court?

It is very important that all jurors report each day they are told to report and that they be on time. Your absence may delay a trial. If you have an emergency (such as a sudden illness or a death in the family), call the jury clerk immediately.



What hours will I serve?

You should report to the court at the date and time shown on your jury summons or as instructed when you call in. At that time, you will be told the procedure for reporting to the court for the rest of the term.

Once you are sent to a courtroom for jury selection, the judge will explain the anticipated schedule for that trial. On occasion, a trial will continue beyond the court's normal working hours. If this happens, you may need to arrange your schedule to allow you to stay longer.



Will I be sequestered (not allowed to go home)?

Probably not. Usually, jurors go home at the end of the day and return the next morning. However, in extremely rare cases, a jury will be **sequestered** during the trial or during deliberations.

“Sequestered” means that instead of going home at the end of the day, jurors stay in a hotel, where their access to other people and to television news and newspapers is limited. This is done to keep them from accidentally hearing something about the trial that was not presented in court, or from being influenced by news reports. This is important because juries must reach their decisions based only on what they have heard in the courtroom during the trial.

In almost all Alaska jury trials, however, the jury goes home at the end of each day and is ordered by the judge not to discuss the case with anyone, nor to watch, read, or listen to news reports about the case. The law requires you to follow these instructions.



Is it true that jurors spend a lot of time waiting?

Yes. You usually will have to wait a while before the jury selection process begins. In addition, if you are selected to serve on a jury, the jury will be sent to the jury room whenever the judge and attorneys discuss legal issues that the jury is not allowed to hear.



Can I bring things to do while I wait?

Yes. Bring a book or other quiet activity, solve a crossword puzzle, write a letter, sketch a picture, or get to know your fellow jurors. Of course, when the court is in session, you should not talk, read, or do other activities. You need to devote your full attention to what is happening in the court.

Remember that as a juror you are a vital part of the justice system. Part of the job of many court employees, such as the bailiffs and the clerks, is to help make your jury service comfortable and convenient. Do not be afraid to ask them for help.



Can I bring my cell phone or other electronic device (laptop computer, tablet, etc.) to court when I am on jury duty?

Yes. However, you must turn off all such devices whenever you are in the courtroom or the jury deliberation room. You must not use these devices at any time to communicate with anyone about the trial or to investigate information about the trial. Jurors must decide the case based solely on the evidence presented in the courtroom. Jurors must not conduct any independent research about the case or the people involved in the case.

Also, court personnel may collect these items and hold them for you when jury deliberation begins.



Are there things I should not bring to court?

For security reasons, weapons of any kind are not permitted in courthouses. Some examples of things you should **not** bring to court are: firearms or anything resembling a firearm; knives of any size or other sharp objects; chemical agents such as mace, bear spray, and other forms of pepper spray; ammunition; or explosives. For a complete listing of prohibited items, see the Alaska Court System Prohibited Items List at <https://courts.alaska.gov/adbulls/docs/ab85.pdf>.

Additionally, childcare is not available at the court. Please do not bring children with you when you appear for jury service.

Jurors play an essential role in the trial of civil and criminal cases. Although many people do not know what to expect from jury service, most look back upon it as a rewarding experience. Jury service is a tangible, challenging, and indispensable contribution to our country.



**PART II:
SELECTING JURIES
FOR TRIALS**



If I report for jury duty, will I sit on a jury?

You may or may not sit on a jury. The parties involved in a case generally seek to settle their differences and avoid the expense and time of a trial. Sometimes, the case is settled just a few moments before the trial begins. So even though several trials are scheduled for a certain day, the court does not know until that morning how many will actually go to trial. But your time spent waiting is not wasted — your very presence in the court encourages settlement.



How are jurors chosen to sit on a jury?

There are several methods a judge may use to select a jury. The following paragraphs describe the most common methods.

When a trial is ready to begin, a group of potential jurors will be called into the courtroom. The clerk will ask the potential jurors to swear or affirm that they will truthfully answer the questions about to be asked of them.

Trials begin with jury selection. Names are randomly selected from those on jury service to form a panel from which the trial jury will be selected. The judge excuses those on the panel whose knowledge of the people or the circumstances would affect their impartiality.

You will be told the names of the parties and their attorneys and the nature of the case. You will be asked such things as whether you know or are related to anyone involved in the case, have any financial or other interest in the outcome of the case, have formed or expressed an opinion, or have any personal bias or prejudice that might affect how you decide the case.

Depending on your court location, one of two methods will be used to select the first group of potential jurors to take seats in the jury box:

Method #1: The names of all potential jurors will be placed on slips of paper in a small box. The clerk will then draw a certain number of names from the box and ask those persons to take seats in the jury box.

Method #2: A computer will produce a list of potential jurors in random order and the clerk will ask the first group of persons on that list to take seats in the jury box.

The judge and the lawyers for each side will ask you some questions. If you are reluctant to answer a particular question in public, you may ask the judge to be examined privately on that topic.

The lawyers will be allowed to ask that certain potential jurors be excused “for cause.” The lawyer must explain why the lawyer believes the juror would not be a fair and impartial juror in the case. The judge may or may not grant these requests. After all seated jurors have been “passed for cause,” the lawyers will be allowed to “peremptorily disqualify” a certain number of jurors (this means to disqualify them without stating the reason why). The number of peremptory disqualifications allowed depends on the type of case.

After the required number of jurors has been accepted, the jurors take an oath swearing or affirming that they will hear the case and give a verdict based solely on the evidence introduced and the instructions of the court. The trial is then ready to begin.



Why can lawyers ask the judge to excuse potential jurors?

Allowing both sides to participate in selecting the jury gives both of them the opportunity to choose jurors that they believe will be fair and impartial. Being excused from a jury in no way reflects on your character or your competence as a juror. The law does not permit jurors to be excused because of their race, sex, age, or religious background.



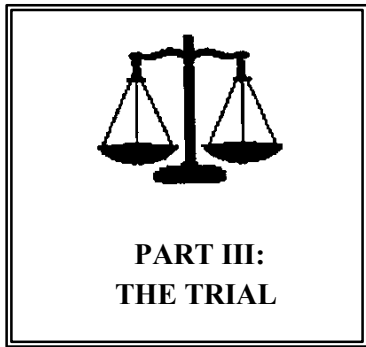
What are alternate jurors?

Juries usually consist of six (6) or twelve (12) jurors, depending on the kind of trial. Frequently, one to four (1-4) additional jurors will be chosen during jury selection. This is to ensure that if one or more jurors are excused during the trial for an emergency, such as illness, there will be an adequate number of jurors at the end of the trial to decide the case.

Some judges will designate which jurors are the "alternates" at the start of the trial. Other judges will not designate which jurors are the alternates until the end of the trial.

In some cases, the judge may release the alternate jurors at the time the trial ends and the jury begins deliberations. In other cases, the judge may require that one or more alternate jurors remain on "stand-by" while the rest of the jury deliberates. While the alternates are on stand-by, they do not need to come to court, but must continue to follow the rules about avoiding outside information and about not discussing the case. The judge may keep an alternate on stand-by in case a deliberating juror cannot complete deliberations, and the alternate needs to fill in. If an alternate must fill in after deliberations start, the whole jury will start over with deliberations that include the alternate juror. Once the jury reaches a verdict, the judge will notify and release any alternate jurors remaining on stand-by.

Trial by jury – being judged by our fellow citizens – is at the very heart of American justice. For the American citizen, there is no finer contribution to our democratic society than serving as a juror.



What are my responsibilities now that I am part of a jury?

In any trial, two kinds of questions will have to be decided at various times. These are questions of law and questions of fact. The judge decides the questions of law. The jury decides the questions of fact. After you and your fellow jurors have decided the questions of fact, you will apply the law (as directed to you by the judge) to the facts that you decided. The judge will give you more specific instructions at the end of the trial.



What is a “question of law”?

Questions of law may be about **procedural matters** (what information can be admitted as evidence, what kind of questions can be asked, which witnesses can appear, and what they can testify about). Or they may involve **substantive law**, which creates, defines, and regulates what actions or behaviors are legal, as well as what rights and remedies exist for those who have been harmed by violations of the law.



What is a “question of fact”?

Quite simply, it is deciding what really happened in a case. Do not be surprised if the evidence given by both sides is conflicting or if the testimony given by one witness contradicts another. After all, if everyone was in agreement about what happened and what should be done about it, the dispute probably would not be in court, and a jury probably would not be needed. Your job is to listen to all the testimony, consider all the evidence, and decide what you think really happened.



Who else will be in the courtroom? What will they be doing?

A number of people will be in the courtroom other than the judge and the jury. The list below explains who they are and what they will be doing.

Plaintiff. In a civil case, the person who brought the case to court is called the plaintiff. In a criminal case, the plaintiff is the government (state or city).

Defendant. In a civil case, the person being sued is called the defendant. In a criminal case, the person charged with a crime is the defendant.

Lawyer. A lawyer is a person licensed to practice law. Other words for "lawyer" include "attorney" or "counsel." In criminal cases, the government's lawyer is often called the "prosecutor."

Clerk. The clerk works for the court and keeps the official record by operating the audio recorder, which records every word spoken during the trial. The clerk also makes a written log of the recording, keeps track of exhibits, administers oaths to jurors and witnesses, and performs many other duties. The clerk is sometimes called the "in-court clerk" or "courtroom judicial assistant."

Bailiff. In Alaska, a bailiff is in charge of the jury when the jury begins deliberations or is sequestered. The bailiff makes sure no one communicates with the jury during deliberations, acts as a messenger between the jury and judge, and assists the jury with phone calls, meal arrangements, etc.

Witnesses. Each side in a trial will probably have a number of witnesses who have information about the dispute. Usually, the judge will ask any witnesses to wait outside the courtroom until it is their turn to testify. This is done so that they will not hear each other's testimony and be influenced by it.

Sequence of a Trial

- I. Selection of a Jury**
- II. Opening Statements**
 - A. Plaintiff's attorney**
 - B. Defendant's attorney (may be delayed until defendant begins presentation of evidence)**
- III. Testimony of Witnesses and Presentation of Evidence**
 - A. Plaintiff's attorney calls plaintiff's witnesses**
 - 1. Direct examination by plaintiff**
 - 2. Cross-examination by defendant**
 - 3. Re-direct examination by plaintiff**
 - 4. Re-cross-examination by defendant**
 - B. Defendant's attorney calls defendant's witnesses.**
 - 1. Direct examination by defendant**
 - 2. Cross-examination by plaintiff**
 - 3. Re-direct examination by defendant**
 - 4. Re-cross-examination by plaintiff**
 - C. Plaintiff's attorney may present rebuttal witnesses and defendant's attorney may cross-examine them.**
- IV. Closing Arguments**
 - A. Plaintiff's attorney**
 - B. Defendant's attorney**
 - C. Plaintiff's attorney**
- V. Judge Reads Jury Instructions to the Jury**
- VI. Jury Retires to Deliberate**
- VII. Verdict of Jury**



What happens during a trial?

Opening Statements. After the clerk has sworn in the jury, the case is ready to begin. Both attorneys may make opening statements explaining their clients' positions and outlining the evidence they expect to present that will support their claims. These statements are not evidence, but may help the jurors get oriented to the case and know what to expect.

Presentation of Evidence. The witnesses for the plaintiff are then called and questioned by the attorney for the plaintiff and cross-examined by the attorney for the defendant. After cross-examination, the plaintiff's attorney may re-examine some of the witnesses and the defendant's attorney may then re-cross-examine them. After all the plaintiff's witnesses and evidence have been presented, the plaintiff's attorney will tell the judge that "the plaintiff rests."

The defendant may then choose to call witnesses. This time, the defendant's attorney questions the witnesses first, then the plaintiff's attorney cross-examines them, followed by re-direct and re-cross-examination. When all the defendant's witnesses and evidence have been presented, the defendant will "rest." After the defendant has finished, the plaintiff has the option to present rebuttal evidence.

Closing Arguments. During closing arguments, the attorneys try to persuade the jury about what the evidence proves and why the attorney's client should win. These closing arguments may help jurors recall details of the case or understand how the various pieces of evidence fit together, but they are not evidence. The plaintiff's attorney speaks first, followed by the defendant's attorney. Finally, the plaintiff's attorney has the option to speak last and close the case.

Jury Instructions. The judge may read some jury instructions throughout the case, but most of them are read at the end, just before jury deliberations begin.



What are jury instructions?

Jury instructions tell the jury what laws govern a particular case. Although the main body of instructions is usually given at the end of the case, instructions may be given at any time during the trial. Some instructions may be read more than once. Regardless of when they are given, jurors must accept and follow the law as instructed by the judge. Even if a juror has a different idea about what the law is or should be, all jurors take an oath at the beginning of trial to follow the law as instructed.



Who awards damages in a civil case?

In a civil case, the jury not only decides on a verdict for one side or the other, but also awards damages. “Damages” are money given to the winning side to compensate them for any loss or injury. If the jury determines that an award of money should be made, the jury decides how much the award should be.



Who decides what happens to the defendant in a criminal case?

The jury decides whether the defendant is “guilty” or “not guilty” on each criminal charge. In Alaska, the judge decides what the sentence (jail time, fines, etc.) should be for each “guilty” verdict. The judge determines the sentence based on minimum/maximum terms and other guidelines established in law. Sentencing will happen in a separate court hearing after the jury is released and may occur up to several months after trial. The jurors must not consider or speculate on what the sentence will be when deciding whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty.

The jury’s primary role is to determine the facts based on an evaluation of all the evidence presented.



What are the two types of criminal cases?

There are two basic kinds of criminal offenses: **felonies** and **misdemeanors**. A **felony** is a crime where the defendant has the possibility of being sentenced to more than one year in jail. A **misdemeanor** is a crime where the maximum sentence is one year or less of jail time.



Why do the attorneys object to certain statements or evidence?

An important part of an attorney's job is to make sure the client gets a fair trial. This includes making sure that the only evidence presented during the trial is evidence that is proper, relevant, and allowed by law. So if evidence is submitted that the attorney feels is improper, or if the attorney feels that the other side is asking questions that are unlawful, the attorney will call out "Objection" and state the reason for the objection. By doing this, the attorney is asking the judge to determine whether the law allows that particular piece of evidence or statement or question to be admitted. If the judge determines that the evidence is proper, the judge will say, "Objection overruled." If the judge determines that the evidence is not proper, the judge will say, "Objection sustained." How often an attorney raises objections during the trial, and how the judge rules on the objections, must not bias you against either attorney's case.



Why is the jury sometimes asked to leave the courtroom?

The judge may send the jury out of the courtroom during a trial. While the jury is gone, the attorneys and the judge may discuss points of law, whether certain evidence can be admitted, or procedural/scheduling matters. The purpose of these discussions is to make sure that the jury hears only the evidence that is relevant and legally valid before making its decision.



Why are jurors sometimes told to disregard testimony?

Sometimes the jury hears testimony that they should not have heard. The judge will tell the jury to disregard the testimony, that is, to consider the case as if they had never heard the improper testimony. You must follow the judge's instructions so that the parties in the case receive a fair trial.



Can I talk to anyone about the trial while it is going on?

No. As long as the trial is still going on, do not discuss the trial with anyone. Do not even discuss the case with your fellow jurors until you begin your deliberations. When the trial is over, you can discuss it with anyone if you want to, or you may keep silent if you prefer.



Can I watch or read news reports about the trial?

No, not as long as the trial or jury deliberations are still going on.



What if I accidentally hear something about the case?

If you hear something outside the courtroom, if someone contacts you about the trial while it is still going on, or if you realize during the trial that you have some special information that relates to the case, ask the clerk or bailiff to tell the judge immediately what has happened. Tell no one else about the incident until you receive instructions from the judge.



What if I need a break during the trial?

The judge will take regular recesses during the trial. However, if you need to take an additional break for some reason, raise your hand to get the judge's attention. If you know before the trial starts that you will need breaks because of a medical condition, be sure to tell the judge.



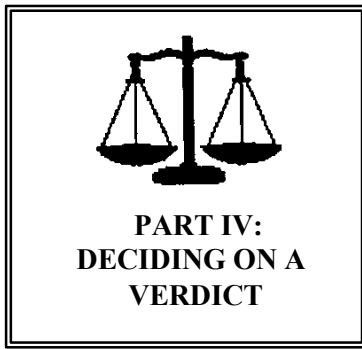
What if I cannot hear the proceedings?

Raise your hand to get the judge's attention and then explain the problem.



Can I take notes during the trial?

The judge will usually tell you at the beginning of the trial if you can take notes. If the judge does not, you can ask the judge for permission.



What happens after the closing arguments and jury instructions?

After you hear the attorneys' closing arguments and the judge gives you instructions, you will leave the courtroom and go to the jury room to begin your deliberations. **Deliberation** is the process the jury uses to reach its verdict. During deliberations, the jury will discuss evidence and review the law and the facts to work toward a consensus (or agreement) on the verdict.



Will anyone be in the jury room besides the jury?

Only the jurors and any interpreter necessary to assist a juror who is hearing- or speech-impaired can be present while the jury is deliberating or voting. But, if you have any questions or need any help, the bailiff will be nearby to pass your written questions to the judge.



What is the first thing we do?

The first thing you should do is elect one member of the jury to be the foreperson. The foreperson will preside over the deliberations, seeing that everyone has an opportunity to participate and that the discussions remain orderly. The foreperson takes part in deliberations and votes on the verdict along with everyone else.



What if we do not understand the jury instructions?

The judge will give the jury a written copy of the jury instructions. If you do not understand the instructions, you may ask the judge to explain them to you. You must put your questions in writing and ask the bailiff to give them to the judge. Before the judge can answer a question, all the parties and attorneys must return to court to discuss it. Thus, it may take some time for you to receive an answer.



How should we conduct our deliberations?

Each juror may have a different opinion at the start of deliberations. To reach a verdict, some jurors may have to change their opinions. You should keep an open mind. Listen carefully to other jurors' opinions and the reasons for their opinions. You should be prepared to tell the other jurors what you think and why you think it. Be fair and carefully consider what your fellow jurors are saying. Do not let yourself be intimidated into changing your opinion, and do not intimidate anyone else. Change your opinion only if you genuinely agree with what another juror is saying.



Can I mention things I know that were not presented in court?

No. If you believe you know information about a party in the case, a witness, or a subject brought up at trial, you cannot discuss it with any juror, nor can you personally consider it. You cannot discuss or consider any information you have unless the information was also presented as evidence at trial. Exception: You and the other jurors can consider common information that is generally known by everyone, such as "rain is wet" or "the sun provides light."



Can we listen to the recording of the testimony?

Possibly. You can make a written request to the judge to listen to the recording of part or all of the testimony of any witness. The judge will discuss your request with the parties before deciding whether to grant it.



Do we all have to agree on the verdict?

It depends on the type of trial. In criminal cases, every juror must agree on the verdict. In civil cases, unless otherwise instructed by the judge, five-sixths of the jury must agree on the verdict (5 of 6 or 10 of 12).



What should we do after we have reached our verdict?

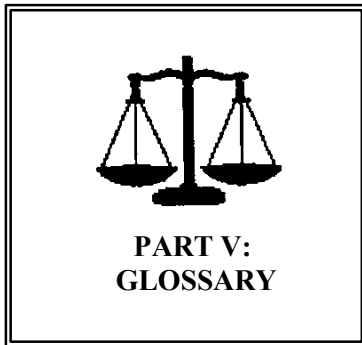
The foreperson will write down the jury’s verdict on a form provided by the judge, sign it, and notify the bailiff that a verdict has been reached (but not what the verdict is). The bailiff will notify the judge, who will call everyone, including the jury, back to the courtroom. The judge will ask for the jury’s verdict, and either the judge, the clerk, or the jury foreperson will read it out loud. At this point, the jurors may be polled—this means they will be asked individually in open court if they each agree with the verdict.



What is juror counseling?

For criminal cases with “extraordinarily graphic, gruesome, or emotional evidence or testimony,” the judge has discretion to allow the jurors to receive counseling paid for by the court. There are certain restrictions under the law on the type of case and type of counseling that is covered, so the judge must first offer the counseling and explain your options before you can expect to receive reimbursement. If you have questions about whether court-paid counseling is an option for you, you should speak to the judge or clerk once you are released from jury service.

Your decisions can affect the human rights, the civil rights, and the property rights of your neighbors and your fellow citizens. The State of Alaska has called on you and is now counting on you to be just, fair, and impartial.



The list below defines some terms used in this handbook, as well as some terms you might hear at the court or during a trial.

action, case, cause, cause of action, suit, lawsuit — These terms all refer to a proceeding in a court of law.

acquit — To find a defendant not guilty in a criminal trial.

affidavit — A written statement made under oath.

answer — A formal response made by the defendant in a civil case, which admits or denies what is claimed by the plaintiff.

burden of proof — The responsibility of proving a disputed charge or claim. In a civil case, usually the plaintiff has the burden of proving that the defendant did something wrong and the plaintiff is entitled to a legal remedy for it. In a criminal case, the government has the burden of proving that the defendant committed a crime.

charge — (1) A formal accusation that someone has committed a crime, or (2) the reading of the jury instructions to the jury by the judge.

counterclaim — A claim by the defendant in a civil case alleging that the plaintiff owes damages or some other remedy to the defendant. Counterclaims must be related to the initial claim by the plaintiff against the defendant.

cross-examination — The questioning of an opposing witness (a witness who was called to testify at the trial by the other side in the case).

damages — Money that a court orders paid to a person who has suffered a loss or injury. The money must be paid by the person who caused the loss or injury.

deposition — Sworn testimony taken and recorded outside the courtroom.

evidence — Any form of proof legally presented at a trial. There are two main types of evidence: exhibits and testimony of witnesses. The jury decides what the exhibits and testimony prove or don't prove, and the level of importance to attach to a piece of evidence. Parties may also "stipulate" that a fact is true—this means the parties agree on it. Finally, a judge may take "judicial notice" of a fact. Jurors are required to consider that facts by "stipulation" and "judicial notice" have been proven, but they can still decide the relative importance of these facts in relation to other evidence.

exhibit — A paper, document, photograph, video, or other physical object presented to the court as evidence during a trial.

grand jury — A jury of 12 to 18 persons selected to inquire into alleged crimes in order to determine whether the evidence is sufficient to charge (or "indict") a person with a crime. Only the prosecution presents evidence to the grand jury.

impeachment of a witness — An attempt to show that the testimony of a witness is not truthful, accurate, or reliable.

inadmissible — Testimony or exhibits that cannot be admitted or received as evidence under the law.

indictment — A written accusation by a grand jury charging someone with committing a crime. An indictment is not evidence of a crime.

leading question — A question that suggests to a witness the answer the attorney wants to hear.

litigant — An individual who brings or defends a lawsuit.

motion — A request made by a party in the case for a ruling or an order by a judge on a particular issue.

perjury — Lying under oath, which is a criminal offense.

petit jury — The trial jury whose functions are described in this handbook.

plea — The defendant's answer to a criminal charge. In Alaska, the possible pleas are "not guilty," "guilty," and "no contest."

pleadings — Formal, written statements by both sides of their claims.

polling the jury — Asking jurors individually in open court after the verdict has been read whether they agree with the verdict.

pro se or pro per — Latin terms often used in court to refer to a party who represents himself or herself without a lawyer.

rebuttal — Providing evidence or argument that refutes or opposes the other party's evidence or argument. Rebuttal is also the name given to the stage of the trial after the defendant has finished presenting evidence, at which time the plaintiff may offer evidence to contradict the defendant's evidence.

search warrant — A written order issued by a judicial officer, directing a law enforcement officer to search a particular place for evidence of a crime.

stipulation — An agreement by the attorneys concerning court procedures or certain facts in the case. Facts that have been stipulated to do not need to be proven in the trial.

testimony — Any statement made by a witness under oath in court.

tort — An injury or wrong done to another person or the person's property, that does not involve a contract, and for which the injured party is seeking damages in a civil case.

United States Constitution

Article III, Section 2. . . . The trial of all crimes, except in cases of impeachment, shall be by jury; . .

Amendment VI. Right to speedy trial, witnesses, etc. In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusations; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

Amendment VII. Trial by jury in civil cases. In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Alaska Constitution

Article I, Section 11. Rights of Accused. In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall have the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of twelve, except that the legislature may provide for a jury of not more than twelve nor less than six in courts not of record. The accused is entitled to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be released on bail, except for capital offenses when the proof is evident or the presumption great; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

Article I, Section 16. Civil Suits; Trial by Jury. In civil cases where the amount in controversy exceeds two hundred fifty dollars, the right of trial by a jury of twelve is preserved to the same extent as it existed at common law. The legislature may make provision for a verdict by not less than three-fourths of the jury and, in courts not of record, may provide for a jury of not less than six or more than twelve.