



## A Guide on Joining Court Hearings by Video Call or Phone

The court or tribunal will carefully decide which hearings can take place over video call or phone. Both phone and video call applications are free to use.

HMCTS will contact you by post or email to:

- let you know if your hearing will take place over video conferencing or phone
- confirm the time and date of the hearing
- ask for your preferred phone number or email
- any support you need to join the hearing

### Prepare for your video call or phone hearing

#### Before your phone hearing

We will call you from an unknown number. If you use call barring services, turn it off for unknown numbers so we can call you.

Make sure the device you will use is fully charged, so you do not get cut off during the hearing.

#### Before your video call hearing by Skype

Once you have responded to the hearing notice to tell us your preferred email address, we will email you a web link to join the video call hearing using Skype for Business. Check your spam folder if you have not received it.

You must download Skype for Business software on the device you will use to join the hearing. [Check this step by step guide](#) on how to download it for your device.

### Support to join the hearing

If you need an interpreter or other assistance to join the hearing, tell us using the contact details in your hearing notice.

You may want to get legal advice before your hearing. To understand more about legal advice and the options available [visit the Legal Choices website](#). You can [check if you are eligible for legal aid](#) or see what other [sources of affordable legal help](#) are available from Citizens Advice.

### If you cannot join the hearing

Please tell us using the contact details on your hearing notice. The Court will decide whether the hearing may:

- go ahead without you
- be scheduled for a later date

If you do not join the hearing, the judge could decide the case in your absence.

## **How to join a hearing by phone or video**

Your hearing notice will tell you if you have a telephone or video hearing.

You should be in a quiet and private space. Even though the hearing is being conducted over the telephone or video, this does not change the serious nature, or the importance of the hearing.

Make sure you're ready at least 15 minutes before the call. This will help you feel ready for the start of the hearing.

### **Phone**

We will call you at the time of your hearing. To join the hearing:

1. You will hear a welcome message saying you're invited to join a conference call.
2. press \* [star] one to join
3. say your name
4. press the # [hash] key
5. Once you're in the hearing, stay on mute until you are asked to speak

### **Video**

To join the video hearing:

1. Click on the Skype for Business link in your email
2. Join as a guest
3. Wait in the Skype lobby until the chairperson invites you into the hearing
4. Stay on mute with your video off until you are asked to speak or turn the video on

At the start of the hearing, a member of staff will introduce themselves and explain how the hearing will work and what you need to do.

If you do not understand something or would like to take a break, ask the judge, magistrate or member of staff.

**It is an offence to record or publish any court hearing without authorisation. You could face a prison sentence if you're found guilty.**

## **After the Hearing**

The Judge or the person in charge of the proceedings will:

- check they have dealt with all the issues raised
- tell you when you can expect a decision
- confirm the hearing is finished and tell you when you can leave the call

## **Tell us about your experience**

We're doing everything we can to keep hearings running during this time. This includes increasing the number of video and phone hearings. Please help us improve our services by telling us about your experience.