

Contempt of court and social media

Contempt of court refers to behaviour that undermines or prejudices court proceedings and interferes with the administration of justice, or creates a real risk of that happening. The same rules apply to members of the public as they do to journalists, especially when posting on social media.

Posting about a case or upcoming trial on social media could amount to contempt of court if it:

- Comments on facts or evidence that will be heard during the trial.
- Mentions the defendant's previous convictions or character.
- Names someone in breach of an injunction or court order.
- Names victims, witnesses, and offenders under the age of 18.
- Names a victim of a sex crime.
- Shares any information about a case that the judge has ordered to be kept private.
- Records and/or shares images, video content, or sound clips from the trial.
- Publishes a court judgment in breach of an embargo.

Some examples of social media posts which could constitute contempt of court:



She's definitely guilty, she's done it before and did two years in jail. Hope she gets a massive jail sentence #throwawaythekey



He is back in court next week – we've all seen him deal drugs to kids down the pub. He needs to go down!! Definitely guilty #nodoubt



When are the police going to charge Robert? He's hit her before and went to anger management – obvs didn't work #chargehim



Dora has been arrested before for a different crime - no chance she's innocent this time then #sendherdown

Think before you post – could your message stop someone having their day in court?

Everyone is innocent until proven guilty – juries must decide on the basis of evidence, not your posts.

We all have a right to talk about what we see, hear, and read in the news – but make sure you know how to stay on the right side of the law.

Your post could mean a trial is delayed or stopped because a fair trial isn't possible – don't get in the way of justice being done.

Contempt of court can be punished by a fine or up to two years in prison.

Help spread the word so that a person's guilt is decided by a jury rather than via social media - #thinkbeforeyoupost

#ThinkBeforeYouPost