# Quick Guide – Online hearings in the Magistrates’ Court

The Magistrates’ Court is now holding online hearings. That means you will not come to court but everyone will join in by video or phone. The court is using a program called WebEx for these hearings.

If you have an online hearing you do not need to go to court in person. You must join your hearing using Webex. You can use Webex with any of these:

* computer
* laptop
* smart phone
* tablet
* mobile phone
* landline telephone

## Before your hearing

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Equipment** | [ ]  Charge your phone, tablet or laptop. Keep your charger with you [ ]  Use headphones with a microphone if you have them[ ]  Have paper and pen ready in case you need to write something down |
|  | **Set-up** | [ ]  Find somewhere quiet to sit[ ]  Sit in front of a blank wall if you can |
|  | **Safety and privacy** | [ ]  Is home a safe place for you to join your hearing? If not, tell your lawyer before your hearing[ ]  Find a place that is private so that nobody will interrupt [ ]  If you would like someone to sit with you during your hearing and support you, you can. Let your lawyer know who your support person is  |
|  | **Planning before the hearing**  | [ ]  Do you need an interpreter? Talk to your lawyer and ask for an interpreter for the hearing[ ]  Talk to your lawyer before your hearing. Ask them any questions you have about your case or about your online hearing [ ]  Work out how you will let your lawyer know you want to speak to them during the hearing. For example, by raising your hand[ ]  Write down your lawyer’s name and phone number in case you have trouble joining your hearing or need to contact them during your hearing[ ]  Check that you have the email with your hearing details and password. Tell your lawyer before your hearing if you do not [ ]  Make an appointment with your lawyer for after your hearing so that you can talk about what happened at your hearing |
|  | **During the hearing** | [ ]  Let your lawyer know if you do not understand what is happening. Try to work out how you will do this before your hearing [ ]  Remember or write down any questions you have that are not urgent so you can ask your lawyer after your hearing |
|  | **After the hearing** | [ ]  Think about or write down what you would like to ask your lawyer [ ]  Tell your lawyer if you did not understand some of what happened[ ]  Do you have any paperwork to finalise? Talk to your lawyer about what you need to do  |

## How to join a Webex hearing

### Using a computer with a camera

* Before your hearing, the court or VLA will send you an email. This email tells you when your hearing is and the password you will need to use. It also has a green ‘Join’ button.

**Join**

* **Join the hearing ten minutes before your hearing time**. Be early so that you can test your connection and check that you can see and hear each other.
* To join your hearing, click the ‘Join’ button in the email. A new browser window (like Chrome or Internet Explorer) will open up and you can choose ‘Join from your browser’.
* A new window will open showing what your camera will show in the hearing. **Click on the green join button to join the hearing**.

### Using a smart phone or tablet

* Before your hearing, the court or VLA will send you an email. This email tells you when your hearing is and the meeting number and password you will need to use. It also has a green ‘Join’ button.
* Join the hearing ten minutes before your hearing time. During this time download the app, test your connection and check that you can see and hear others.
* To join your hearing, click on the green ‘Join’ button in the email.
* The first time you do this, you will be asked to download the Cisco Webex Meetings app. The app is free. It might take a few minutes to download.
* Once the app is downloaded, open it and tick the box to accept the Terms of Service and Privacy Statement.
* You will then be able to click ‘Join the meeting’. Enter the meeting number and password from the email.

### Using a phone (linking with audio only)

* Before your hearing, the court or VLA will send you an email. This email tells you when your hearing is and the number to call if you are joining by phone. It also has the meeting number and password you will need to use.
* If you cannot use video, you can join your hearing using any type of phone.
* Join the hearing ten minutes before your hearing time. During this time test your connection and check that you can hear each other.
* To join your hearing, call the phone number from the email.
* You will be asked to enter the meeting number and password, these are in the email.
* You will be able to hear everyone at your hearing and you will be able to speak.

## How to use the microphone and video

If you join your hearing using video, start with the video and microphone switched off. That means you will not interrupt anyone who is speaking, and they will not see or hear you until you are ready. Before you join, check the icons are red (off) with a line through them.

 Microphone

 Video

Once you have joined the hearing and you are ready, click on each icon to turn it on. The icons will turn grey.

 

**When the microphone and video are on, everyone else in the hearing can see and hear you.**

When you are not speaking, turn off your microphone by clicking the icon so it is red with a line through it:



**Keep your video on during the hearing.**

## During your hearing

If you do not have a safe, quiet place for your hearing, or have other questions or concerns, contact your lawyer as soon as possible.

You should behave as if you were in an actual court room:

* Don’t eat during the hearing and only drink water, if you need to.
* Find a quiet place to sit for your hearing, so that you can focus on the hearing and people will not interrupt you. Don’t do any other activities during the hearing
* If you are joining using video, remember the Magistrate and others can see you. If you are concerned about being seen talk to your lawyer about this before the hearing.
* When you are talking, try to use formal titles. Call the Magistrate ‘Your Honour’.
* Wear the clothes you would choose if you were going to court in person. The Magistrate and others will need to be able to see your face – do not wear a hat or sunglasses.
* Think about what you have in your background that can be seen by the Magistrate and others.
* You are not allowed to record a hearing or take photos of it, this includes screenshots

## How to leave your hearing

Once the hearing has finished, you can

leave it by:

 Video – click on the red X button

Phone without video – just hang up.

## More information

##### Webex

For more information about using Webex visit [Webex product help](https://help.webex.com/en-us/)

Watch this video about Webex functions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-YgObuSOo0&feature=youtu.be>

You can do a test hearing here: [https://www.WebEx.com/test-meeting.html](https://www.webex.com/test-meeting.html)

If you have any problems using Webex, tell your lawyer as soon as possible.

##### Victoria Legal Aid

Learn more about legal issues and [COVID-19 coronavirus](https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/covid-19-coronavirus)

See our Find legal answers page on [Going to court for a criminal charge](https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/going-to-court-for-criminal-charge)

See our Find Legal Answers page [Family Violence](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/videos-about-the-law/family-violence)

See [Get help with COVID-19 coronavirus](https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/covid-19-coronavirus/get-help)

##### Other information

Justice Connect [How do I prepare for remote court hearings](https://justiceconnect.org.au/resources/how-do-i-prepare-for-remote-court-hearings/)