



Court of Appeals of Georgia

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Preparing for Oral Arguments via Zoom for Parties

Becoming familiar with Zoom videoconferencing software is an important place to start. There are many resources available for training, including Zoom's own quick start guide for new users. It explains how to sign up for a Zoom account and how to join a test meeting to check your audio and video.

- In addition to becoming familiar with the Zoom software, it is important to **test** the computer, audio, video, and internet connection technology you will use during the oral argument. A hardwired internet connection using a cable is preferable to relying on a wireless connection for the oral argument.
- For the best **audio and video quality** use a desktop or laptop computer with a built-in or external USB webcam with microphone, rather than a tablet or mobile phone. Some users prefer the audio quality achieved using headphones, headsets, or earbuds with built-in microphones. Whatever computer, audio, or video equipment you use, test the equipment in the same location and under the same conditions that you will encounter during oral argument.
- Another important consideration is your **location** during the oral argument. Find a quiet, protected place where audio and visual interruptions are minimized or eliminated. Lighting is also critical to think about and test. Light sources should be positioned in front of you to illuminate your face. Light sources located behind you will place your face in the shadows.
- **Dress** professionally as if you are appearing before the in Court in person. Check the **background** to see if there is anything distracting, out of place, or unprofessional. Bookcases and plain walls make good backgrounds. Windows and unusual pieces of art do not. Use of a professional-looking Zoom virtual background feature is permissible. The Court offers photos of its courtroom from several angles as an option.
- Zoom displays **your name** in the lower left-hand corner of the video frame. Please identify yourself with the case number, then NT or EE, depending on which party you represent. You can change your name by either editing your Zoom profile or by clicking on "Participants" in a Zoom meeting, choosing your name from the list, and then renaming yourself.
- Conduct a Zoom **moot court** with your colleagues. Nothing will prepare you better for a Zoom oral argument than using Zoom during a moot court. This would be a good time to test the "Share Screen" feature if you plan to present any exhibits

during your argument. If you encounter difficulties during your moot court, contact court personnel as soon as possible to discuss how you can resolve those issues prior to oral argument.

- Court personnel will contact you prior to the oral argument to set up a **test meeting**. During this test meeting, court personnel will go over the details of the Zoom oral argument.
- Discuss your options with court personnel what to do if **any issues** arise before or during oral argument. Make sure you know who to call or email if you need help. During the test session with court personnel, practice leaving the meeting and reconnecting to simulate what to do if there is an interruption in internet service or other technical issues. The Zoom oral argument invitation should also contain instructions for joining the meeting using a cell phone so that the argument can continue as a voice conference if necessary.

Day of Oral Argument

Waiting Room

When you join the oral arguments, you will be automatically placed in the Zoom waiting room. We will bring you in from the waiting room when we have the judges online and ready to proceed. Do not panic or think you need to re-log in while you are in the waiting room.

Only attorneys presenting arguments in the oral arguments will be moved from the Waiting Room to the video conference. Do not forward the Zoom link or Meeting ID and Password to others. Co-counsel, represented parties, interested parties, etc., should log into the live-stream and watch from that link. We are live-streaming and archiving these arguments just like we live-stream and archive oral arguments held in the courthouse. All participants in the Zoom oral argument for a particular case will be visible throughout the conference, and the fewer participants we have, the clearer both the audio and visual will be.

Etiquette

Stay muted until the Presiding Judge recognizes your turn to argue.

You may sit or stand during the argument, but make sure your head and shoulders are visible on camera. Position yourself near the center of the frame, leaving some room in the frame above your head. The video camera should be as level with your eyes as possible, so that you are looking straight ahead at the camera. Be mindful of your mannerisms. When you are on Zoom, other participants can see you.

During the argument, there may be a slight audio delay, and if you do not stop talking immediately when you hear a judge speaking you will be talking over each other for a brief time. By placing yourself on mute while you are not speaking, you will be able to prevent any background noise from interrupting others during the oral argument. Speak naturally, but slowly and pronounce each word. If someone can't hear you, then adjust the level on your microphone and ensure that it is not obstructed.

Using the gallery view instead of the speaker view in Zoom will allow you to see all the judges at once. This view may help you identify who is speaking when multiple people speak at once. It will also more closely approximate standing in front of the bench, as you would during an oral argument presented in the courtroom.

Exhibits

To share exhibits that are on your screen during your argument, select the "Share Screen" option on the bottom of the screen or press "Alt + S". You should practice this thoroughly prior to attempting to do so before your argument.