

Frequently Asked Questions about Jury Duty



Jury Duty Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why is jury service required?

This right to a trial by jury in certain cases is guaranteed by the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Any person who is entitled to a jury trial is entitled to a jury that represents the whole community. It is important that a fair cross section of the City's population is represented on the jury panel to prevent discrimination or bias.

Who is eligible to serve as a juror?

In order to serve as a juror for the City of West Linn Municipal Court, a person must be a citizen of the United States, a resident of West Linn, and 18 years of age or older. Pursuant to applicable law, citizens 70 years of age or older are encouraged to serve, but will be excused upon request.

How long is my term of jury duty?

Jurors in the City of West Linn serve a twelve-month term. Although you are on call during those months, you will not be required to serve on more than two juries nor more than 10 days unless additional days are needed to finish a trial. Most jury trials last only one day, but occasionally they last two days.

Will I get paid for jury duty?

Yes. Jurors are paid a nominal fee for each day that they report for jury service.

Will I have to come if the case is settled before the day of trial?

Please call our jury line, (503) 656-4263 the night before trial to confirm whether jury trials are still scheduled.

What if my employer doesn't want me to serve?

Oregon law provides that your employer may not discharge, threaten to discharge, intimidate or coerce you by reason of your jury service. Any violations are to be reported to the Court.

Can I change the date that I am required to report?

If you are unable to report on the day stated on our summons, you may ask that service be deferred. This request should be made by phone or in writing within ten days of when you receive your summons. Please explain the reason for the delay, and suggest some alternate dates when you will be available for service.

Where is the Court, and where do I park?

The West Linn Municipal Court is located on the 2nd floor of West Linn City Hall at 22500 Salamo Drive. Free parking is provided in front of City Hall.

What should I bring when I report?

You may bring reading material in case you have to wait and you might need a sweater or jacket in our air-conditioned courtroom.

When will I get to eat lunch?

Usually a lunch break occurs around noon. Occasionally, a judge may change the schedule for purposes of the trial. You will be free to leave City Hall during lunch.

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What if I fail to appear on the day I am summoned?

The Court has the power to order that you appear in court and explain why you were unable to report for jury service. Citizens who don't appear for jury service may be punished for contempt of court.

Where do I check in?

You will check in with the clerks at the Municipal Court window located on the 2nd floor of the West Linn City Hall. Jurors normally wait in the City Council Chambers after check-in, and we request that you remain there until you are otherwise excused.

Conduct in the Courtroom

May I take my cell phone or pager into the courtroom?

All cell phones must be turned off in the courtroom, and pagers must be muted.

What kind of case will I hear?

West Linn Municipal Court hears a variety of criminal traffic and misdemeanor cases. A case comes to trial when the City of West Linn charges a person, called the defendant, with violating a law, such as driving under the influence of alcohol or theft. In criminal cases, after hearing evidence, the jury is asked to return a verdict of either guilty or not guilty.

Will I be chosen for a specific trial?

When a specific trial is about to begin, the judge will have the clerk randomly select potential jurors from the jury pool. The selected jurors will be seated in the courtroom. The judge will introduce the jurors to the parties and their attorneys. The judge may then outline the issues of the case and may ask the potential jurors some general questions. Next, the parties or their attorneys may also question the potential jurors. This jury selection process is called "voir dire" which is French for "to tell the truth." Attorneys can challenge potential jurors "for cause" by giving the judge a good reason to have a juror excused. Each attorney may also use a limited number of "peremptory" challenges without giving a reason. If you are excused from serving, you should not take it personally because it is not a reflection on your competency or character. The chosen jurors will be seated in the jury box and sworn in when voir dire is completed, at which time the judge may instruct the jury about rules to be followed during the trial.

May I investigate or research the case outside of the court?

No, you should never investigate or do research on your own and you must avoid conversations with the parties, witnesses, and attorneys to ensure a fair trial.

Are there certain rules of court that I need to follow?

- Be prompt, because tardiness can cause delays and inconvenience to the judge, the lawyers, the parties, the witnesses, and other jurors.
- When the court session is about to begin, the bailiff will announce "all rise" as the judge enters the courtroom. All who are able should then stand up until the judge is seated.
- Generally, a juror must sit in the same seat in the jury box throughout the trial. This enables the judge, the clerk, and the lawyers to identify the juror more easily.
- Pay careful attention to each question and answer. Notify the judge if you cannot hear.
- You must never discuss the case with your fellow jurors until after the judge instructs you to begin deliberations.
- If the proceedings last for more than one day, do not talk with others (non-jurors) about the trial. You may discuss the case with non-jurors only after the jury has reached a verdict.
- For trials that last longer than one day, do not listen to radio or television accounts of the trial or read articles about it in the newspapers. If anyone persists in talking to you about the trial or tries to influence you as a juror, you should report that fact to the judge immediately.

What are the stages of a typical trial?

1. Opening Statement: The parties' attorneys give opening statements outlining the facts involved in the case. They will declare what they intend to establish by the evidence to follow. Opening statements are not evidence.
2. Evidence: The City will call witnesses and examine them in an effort to prove the charges against the defendant. The defendant has the right to cross-examine any of the City's witness. The City will "rest" its case after presenting all of its evidence. Next, the defendant may call witnesses to dispute the City's claims. After the defendant presents all of his/her evidence, he/she rests. A defendant in a criminal case may choose not to present evidence. The City has the right to cross-examine any of the defendant's witnesses.

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3. Rebuttal: The City may bring back witnesses who have testified, or bring in other witnesses for the purpose of refuting new issues raised by the defendant's witnesses.
4. Closing Arguments: Following the presentation of the evidence, the attorneys for each party will sum up their cases for the jury. Closing arguments are not evidence.
5. Jury Instructions: The judge will give instructions to the jury to define the issues and instruct the jurors on the laws that govern the case.
6. Deliberations: Following the closing arguments and jury instructions, the jury retires to the jury room to consider the case and reach a verdict.

What should I expect when the jury retires for deliberation?

The first job of the jury is to choose a presiding juror who will see that every juror has an opportunity to be heard. The presiding juror will also conduct the balloting when the jury votes on a verdict. It is important that you wait to formulate your opinion about the verdict until the deliberations begin in the jury room. To avoid arguments in the jury room, listen to everyone's opinion, make your own decision, and vote as your intellect and conscience dictate.

Do I go back into open court?

After the jury votes, the presiding juror will fill out a verdict form. All six members of the jury must sign the verdict form. The jury will then return to the courtroom where the verdict will be given to the judge, who will announce the jury's verdict in open court. Neither the judge nor the parties are allowed to make comments to the jurors about the verdict. The attorneys may obtain an order from the judge authorizing them to contact or poll a juror. The judge will then dismiss the jurors.

Important Reminders

- Arrive for jury duty on time, at least a few minutes early.
- Get a good night's rest so that you can concentrate on the proceedings.
- To ensure that you will be paid, follow the sign-in procedure.

The City of West Linn thanks you for your service!

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