

JURY SERVICE: THE TRIAL PROCESS

Congratulations! You have been selected to serve on a jury. You should have received instructions from the judge regarding when to arrive, the schedule for the day, and the rules of juror conduct, such as not discussing the case with anyone, etc.*

You may be wondering, though, about what you should expect during the trial. Here is a basic outline of the trial process.

1. **Opening Statements** — Both civil and criminal cases begin with opening statements in which the attorneys for each side outline the case, discuss the evidence they will present, and pinpoint the issues the jury will be deciding. These statements are not evidence and should not be considered as evidence during deliberations.
2. **Presenting the Evidence** — During the trial, the attorneys will present any physical evidence and call witnesses to testify in support of their case and/or to challenge evidence presented by the other side. It is important that you pay close attention. As the jury, you will have the opportunity to examine any exhibits presented to the court, and, depending on the judge's instructions, you may be able to take notes during the trial.
3. **Rulings by the Judge** — The judge may need to rule on questions of law as the trial progresses. Sometimes, jurors may be asked to exit the courtroom until these rulings are made.
4. **Instructions to the Jury** — After all of the evidence has been presented, the judge will provide jurors with the Charge of the Court, which includes the questions regarding the key issues of the trial that the jurors must answer in their deliberations.
5. **Closing Arguments** — Before the jury is released to deliberate, each side will be given the opportunity to summarize their case. While this is a chance for the attorneys to try to persuade the jury to decide in their favor, the statements made during closing arguments are not evidence and should not be considered as such during deliberations. Jurors should not make up their minds until they undergo thorough deliberations regarding the facts of the case.
6. **Jury Deliberations and Verdict** — The jury will be sent to the jury room to consider the questions the judge presented and to decide a final verdict.

* The Texas Supreme Court Rule of Civil Procedure 226a, regarding juror conduct, is available at <http://www.txcourts.gov/rules-forms/rules-standards.aspx>