

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.*

But what should you 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.
2. **Presenting the Evidence** — This is the meat of the trial, and it is important that you pay close attention to the proceedings. The attorneys will present any physical evidence and call witnesses to testify in support of their case. The jury 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. In that event, jurors will be asked to exit the courtroom until any rulings are decided.
4. **Instructions to the Jury** — Once 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** — While the closing arguments are a chance for the attorneys for each side to summarize their case and to try and persuade the jury in their favor, these statements are not evidence and should not be treated as such. 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.courts.state.tx.us/tjc/juryinfo/rules.asp>.