



# NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET FOR JURORS



Serving on a jury is a rewarding experience, and you may naturally want to share the experience with others or learn more about the trial online. Nearly everyone seems to use social media and the internet these days; whether on a smartphone, tablet, or computer, our communities are more and more connected through the fast pace of technology. But sometimes the changes to technology happen faster than we can learn when they are appropriate to use and when they are not.

Jury duty is one such time and place where you must be careful. Limiting when you can use your devices to go online, what you can look up, and who you can post about is difficult.

But when serving as a juror, you are not allowed to:

- Use your devices in the courtroom
- Search social media or the internet for information about the case, just as you are restricted from doing with newspapers, books, and other sources
- Post to social media or the internet about the case

These rules help to make sure that everyone pays attention during the trial and makes their decisions based only on the evidence presented and the law provided.

People may go online or use social media for many reasons, such as boredom or habit, because they want to share and feel connected, as part of a religious or hobby group, or just for fun. They may want to go online to learn more about a case or post about a trial because they are confused, are frustrated, or truly believe that their actions will help make things fair or find the truth. Or they may simply be curious, want to right a wrong, or even have political reasons.

Regardless of why, many people use the internet and social media during their jury service without fully understanding the effects of their behavior as they carry out their duties as a juror.

In general, you are free to use your devices, social media, and the internet outside the courtroom

for activities unrelated to the case, except in rare instances, at the judge's direction. However, as stated earlier, you cannot use your devices when you are in the courtroom, even for reasons that have nothing to do with the case, and you cannot use social media or the internet to:

- Talk about the case
- Look up the parties in the case
- Conduct your own research about the case
- Post information or evidence presented at the trial
- Look up the meaning of a legal word or idea

When you do so, not only are you violating everyone's right to due process under the law, you may also find information that is false, off base, or inappropriate to share in the case. What you discover



can cause a bias or prejudice and affect your decisionmaking. It may also accidentally expose you to passive news or content, show you the biases of other people online, or put you in communication with someone you weren't looking for, which may affect your ability to perform your duty as a juror.

So, again, once you enter the courtroom, you will not be allowed to use the internet, social media, or your devices, including your phone. All technology will need to be powered off or silenced. You will need to focus your attention on what is happening in the courtroom so that you can be prepared for what you may be asked or presented with. If you are picked to serve as a juror for a trial, this restriction will also apply in the deliberations room when you are finally allowed to talk about the case with your fellow jurors. Turning off or silencing your devices will make sure that you are not distracted, that you stay informed, and that you can participate fully.

Once your jury service is over, you will be able to return to your normal social media and internet habits and use your devices freely outside the courtroom.

Navigating the internet and social media is tough enough in everyday life, let alone as a juror, but knowing that they can affect you and understanding how are two of the first steps in meeting your civic duty when asked to serve on a jury.

Thank you for your service and your respect for the rule of law, which guarantees everyone a right to be judged by a jury of their peers.

## GLOSSARY

*Please note that, because of the rapidly changing nature of social media and the internet, this list does not cover every term, and many terms may not be used regularly.*

The internet includes the following:

- **public websites**
- **private forums or blogs**
- **networks**
- **chatrooms**
- **social media**

Social media includes the following:

- **Facebook**
- **Instagram**
- **Twitter**
- **Snapchat**
- **Reddit**
- **WhatsApp**
- **Foursquare**
- **Yelp**
- **WeChat**
- **TikTok**
- **LinkedIn**
- **Pinterest**
- **Discord**
- **Twitch**
- **YouTube**
- **Slack**

*\*Online jargon and internet slang terms may be researched using websites such as Google and Wikipedia, as well as dictionaries such as Merriam-Webster and the Oxford English Dictionary.\**

*Sources consulted in the making of this brochure: Tasmania Law Reform Institute.*





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