



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

Juror – Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How did you get my name?**

Jurors, both grand and petit, are selected at random from the voters' registration list obtained from the counties comprising the court's venue. These lists are gathered every four years, after the general election.

2. **Why do I have to answer the race and gender questions on the questionnaire?**

Although race and gender are questions you are required to answer on your qualification questionnaire, these are NOT factors in determining your eligibility to serve as a juror. The information gathered by the court on these forms is aggregated to ensure proportional representation of certain demographic groups in the jury wheel.

3. **Do I have to serve the whole month I am summoned?**

No, except by extraordinary circumstance. Each new jury pool begins the Monday of the first full week of a month and extends through the Friday before the first full week of the next month. Jurors are obligated to telephone the court after 5:00 p.m. on Friday beginning the weekend before their month of service, to learn if they must appear at the courthouse the next business day, or be instructed on when to call the toll free number again. Once jurors have appeared at the courthouse it is unlikely they will be required to appear a second time that month, although such a possibility does exist. Consequently, jurors must continue to telephone the recorded instruction throughout their term of service until told otherwise.

4. **What if I feel unqualified or over-qualified to serve?**

You can be neither. Any person can serve well as a juror. Jurors come from all walks of life and the average juror has no special expertise or knowledge to enhance his or her qualification. Each juror's opinions count just as much as those of the other jurors. People with education in the law or other relevant matters will NOT automatically be excluded from jury service.

5. **I have already served as a juror in state court. Do I have to serve in federal court too?**

Yes. State and federal courts operate separately from one another, so your service in one court does not satisfy your service obligation to the other.

6. **I am over 70 years of age. Do I still have to serve?**

No. But, if you are physically able and desire to serve, your service is welcomed. Our goal is to bring demographic diversity reflective of the array of age, gender, culture, race, ethnic, and occupation categories prevalent in the community. If you are 70 or older, however, you will be excused from service upon your request.

7. **I feel I need to be excused, what do I do?**

In responding to the qualification questionnaire, a prospective juror may list in the “Remarks” section on the back of the questionnaire the reason(s) he or she feels an excuse is warranted. The reason(s) provided will be reviewed by a jury clerk, the clerk of court and a United States district judge. The court may grant or deny the excuse, or defer the juror’s service to a later month. If the request is neither denied nor deferred in writing, the juror must appear when summoned. The juror will have another opportunity at that point to make a renewed request for excuse directly to a judge.

8. **Should I telephone the court for the status on my excuse request?**

Yes. You may call the automated system at 800-596-3354 to check the status of your excuse request.

9. **What happens on the first day of service?**

The first day a juror reports to the courthouse a jury clerk will provide the juror with information about jury service. The juror will also view an orientation video to help learn about courtroom procedure and the role of jurors in the process. Jurors are also administered the juror oath.

10. **If I am not selected to serve on a trial, what happens next?**

Jurors are told before leaving the courthouse whether they will have to report back, are excused until further notice, or are permanently excused. You should not be called back for minimum of two years.

11. What are the hours of jury duty?

Unless otherwise instructed, the daily hours of service are from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. It is extremely important that jurors be on time when reporting in the morning and when returning from lunch. An entire trial proceeding can be delayed due to the tardiness of one juror.

12. If summoned to court, will I have to spend a lot of time waiting until I am sent to a courtroom?

No, generally. The court has great concern for the welfare of individual citizens who, as a public service, devote time and effort to the judicial process. In consideration of this, the court adopted a “Juror Utilization Plan” establishing policies and principles desired to minimize unnecessary inconvenience to jurors. That is why jurors are instructed to telephone for instructions before reporting. Jurors will not be summoned to court unless needed for trial that day.

13. I have already scheduled vacation during my service month, what can I do?

A one week deferment due to vacation is allowed since you are scheduled to be on call for a month. When you complete the qualification questionnaire, indicate in the “Remarks” section which week you will be unavailable during the month. You will be responsible to telephone in the rest of the month before and after vacation, according to previously stated policy. If you know you are going to be unavailable for more than a week during the month, specify in the “Remarks” section which month within the next twelve month period you will make yourself available for service. The court will take this information into consideration as it determines whether to grant a deferment.

14. How long do trials last?

Typically, trials last one to three days. Occasionally, trials take a week or more to try. In the event of a lengthy trial, the court will inquire if there are any excuse requests based on hardship or other special needs to prevent a juror from serving the duration of the trial.

15. What if my job will be jeopardized because of jury duty?

Your job is protected by law (28 U.S.C. § 1975) while serving federal jury duty. Accordingly, an employer cannot punish or threaten to punish an employee in any way because of jury service. Doing so could subject the employer to serious sanctions.

16. What about parking fees, gas and other expenses? Will I get reimbursed?

Jurors are paid mileage, based on round-trip travel between home and the courthouse, as calculated by zip code, as well as parking expenses, at the current reimbursement rate (*please inform the jury clerk if you paid to park but do not give the jury clerk your parking stub*). The court will also reimburse the cost of public transportation. No other expenses are reimbursed.

17. Is there a dress code for jurors?

Yes. All jurors shall be appropriately attired, and shall not be groomed or attired in such a manner reasonably calculated to distract attention from the proceedings, call attention to themselves, or show disrespect to the court. Jeans, shorts, T-shirts, tank tops and halter tops are NOT considered appropriate attire.

18. What can I bring with me when I report for jury duty?

There may be times out of the court's control when you will not be required in the courtroom. You may want to bring a book or magazine. Cellular phones and pagers are not permitted in the courtroom. Cameras and weapons are not permitted in the courthouse.

19. Will I be "sequestered" and have to stay overnight?

Occasionally a trial day will extend past 5:00 p.m. in order, for example, to complete a line of testimony. Sequestration, the need to stay overnight, is extremely rare in federal court. Only two juries in the last ten years have been sequestered, and only then because of the notoriety of the cases. This should not be a concern.

20. What happens if I don't report for jury duty?

The law provides that any individual who fails to appear for jury duty when summoned, and who is not excused by the court, must be required to appear before the court and show cause as to why he or she should not be held in contempt of court. Contempt penalties range from a fine of \$100 to three days imprisonment, or both (*See 28 U.S.C. § 1866(g)*).