

TOP TIPS FOR REMOTE MEETINGS AND HEARINGS

These are challenging but interesting times. Barristers and staff have had to very quickly and suddenly embrace new technology and new ways of working. In the last week Hailsham barristers have been involved in online hearings, round-table meetings and mediations. Whilst we don't aim to provide a technical manual on how to use Skype, Zoom or Teams, we wanted to share a little of what we have learned in terms of how to get the most from remote meetings and hearings.

1. **Be kind:** many people are battling with childcare responsibilities and many people haven't got a haven of a home office with lockable doors. There will be barking dogs, screaming toddlers, dodgy microphones and doorbells ringing. Let's be understanding. Next time it could be you!
2. **Make the most of all your devices:** you might need to take instructions from your client or instructing solicitor during a video conference. WhatsApp on your phone or email on your iPad enables you to keep in touch without appearing too distracted, and you may need a separate three-way telephone call, but let your tribunal know what you're doing.
3. **Be seen not heard:** remember to mute the microphone when not speaking e.g. during the opponent's submissions, but don't forget you can still be seen.
4. **Give the technology a dummy run:** check the microphone is working and the camera is on, get used to the sight of yourself in the corner, position the screen to avoid family photos or blur your background if you can, learn how to mute the microphone and test joining, leaving and re-joining the conference.
5. **Use the largest screen you have available:** you may need to have multiple documents open on your device, or wish to take notes - not impossible on an iPhone but quite tricky! You might be able to repurpose a spare TV.
6. **Just because you have a video camera doesn't mean you have to use it:** telephone meetings can sometimes work just as well. Central dial-in numbers with pin-code access work best. If your mobile has Wi-Fi calling, enable it and avoid mobile phone black spots.
7. **Invest in the hardware:** separate webcams and headsets are often better than your laptop's built-in camera, mic and speakers, but they are in decreasing supply and at increasing cost at present. If your laptop works, live with it!
8. **Don't get too excited by the technology:** it is amazing and you may be delighted that it actually works, but don't forget this is a real hearing with real outcomes for your client. Focus on the matter in hand and let the technology work its magic.
9. **Be honest:** we are all in the same boat. If something has gone wrong, explain and ask the other parties to cut you some slack.