Jury Duty

Jury trials are scheduled on Mondays, and almost always conclude the same day.

Generally, 26 prospective jurors are subpoenaed for each trial. If you are called for jury duty, please report to the Municipal Court Clerk's office no later than 9:00 a.m. on the morning of the trial.

Frequently Asked Questions about Jury Duty

Q: How can I be excused from jury duty?
A: The court will excuse citizens from jury duty only for legitimate hardship, on a case-by-case basis. If you want the court to excuse you, as soon as you receive a subpoena for jury duty, please send a letter which explains the hardship.

Q: What kind of case do juries decide?
A: Jury trials in the Lake Oswego Municipal Court occur for misdemeanor crimes only. No felony cases are heard. Misdemeanor crimes are punishable by up to one year in jail and a maximum fine of $5,000. They include Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants, Reckless Driving, Hit and Run, Assault, Menacing, Harassment, Criminal Trespass, and certain Theft crimes.

Q: What should I expect to happen during my jury service?
When you report for jury duty, the bailiff will assemble all of the prospective jurors in a room that adjoins the courtroom. The bailiff will then bring all the jurors into the courtroom when directed to do so by the judge.

The next part of the process is jury selection, also referred to as voir dire. The judge and attorneys ask questions of the prospective jurors in order to discover any reason a particular juror might not be impartial in the case, or any other reason he or she should not serve. It allows attorneys to get to know a little about the jurors before they make their jury selection. At the conclusion of voir dire, the attorneys may exercise challenges to certain prospective jurors, and a jury of 6 persons is selected.

The jury is sworn in, and the judge makes some preliminary comments before the trial begins and witnesses are called. At the conclusion of the evidence, the attorneys make closing arguments and the judge instructs the jurors on the law that applies to the case. The jurors then retire to the jury room to deliberate and reach a verdict. The verdict must be unanimous: all 6 jurors must agree either to convict or acquit the defendant of the crime. When a verdict is reached, the court receives it and excuses the jury.

Q: What time will the jury be excused?
A: The jury will not be excused until a verdict is reached. If there is no verdict by 7:00 p.m., the judge usually asks the jurors whether they wish to continue deliberating or return the following morning. Juries are usually able to reach their verdicts and be excused before 7:00 p.m., but each case is different. The court will try to accommodate any important and unavoidable schedule conflicts, but please let us know about them as soon as possible.

Q: Are breaks or phone calls allowed?
A: The court takes a short break after jury selection so the courtroom may be prepared for trial. A recess of about 10 minutes is usually called mid-morning, and then for an hour around noon for lunch. One more short recess occurs mid-afternoon. The court tries to time recesses so that they occur after a witness has finished testifying, rather than in the middle of testimony, so the actual time of the recess may vary. A phone is available in the jury room. If you need to make a phone call at a particular time, please let the bailiff know and the court will try to time one of the recesses accordingly.

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