A PLAIN-ENGLISH CIVICS GUIDE

Jury Duty and the Courtroom, Step by Step

Step by Step



What to Expect When You Are Summoned, and How Cases Move Through a Nevada Court

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Before You Begin

Sooner or later, most of us find a jury summons in the mailbox. For a lot of people, it brings a small knot of worry. What do I have to do? Will I lose pay? Can I get out of it? What actually happens in that courtroom?

This short book answers those questions for Nevada readers. It walks you through jury duty from the day the summons arrives to the day you are released, explains how criminal and civil cases move through court, covers small claims court for when you need to sue someone yourself, and introduces each person you will see in the courtroom.

Where the Facts Come From

The rules in this book come from Nevada law, mainly Chapter 6 of the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) on jurors and Chapter 16 on civil trials, and from the jury pages of Nevada courts. General courtroom descriptions come from the American Bar Association and the federal courts. The sources are listed at the back. Courts in each county run jury service a little differently, so your summons and your court's website have the final word.

The Date This Book Stops At

The facts were checked as of November 18, 2026.

> **This Is Not Legal Advice** This book explains how the system works. If you are a party in a case, especially a criminal case, talk to a lawyer. Nevada's Civil Law Self-Help Center at civillawselfhelpcenter.org can help people without one in civil matters.

Chapter 1: Why Juries Matter

A jury is a group of ordinary citizens who listen to the evidence in a trial and decide the facts. The judge decides what the law is. The jury decides what happened.

That idea is old and it is central to American law. The right to a jury trial is written into the U.S. Constitution for criminal cases and many civil cases. It means that the government cannot send a person to prison, and one neighbor cannot take another neighbor's money in court, without first convincing people from the community.

Who Can Serve in Nevada

Nevada law says a juror must be a "qualified elector of the State, whether registered or not," who lives in the county, has "sufficient knowledge of the English language," and is not unable to serve because of physical or mental infirmity. A person convicted of a felony cannot serve unless the right to serve on a jury has been restored.

In practice, court pages put it simply: you must be at least 18, a U.S. citizen, a resident of the area the court serves, and able to understand English. Because the law covers electors "whether registered or not," you can be summoned even if you are not registered to vote.

More Kinds of Jury Trials Than Before

In 2019, the Nevada Supreme Court decided that people charged with misdemeanor domestic violence have a right to a jury trial. Since then, municipal courts and justice courts, such as Reno Municipal Court and Reno Justice Court, have held jury trials in

those cases. So you might be summoned to a city or township court, not just to the county district court.

Try This Look up the courts that serve your address: the district court for your county, your township's justice court, and your city's municipal court if you live in a city. Find each one's jury page and save it.

Chapter 2: The Summons Arrives

Read It Right Away

Your summons tells you which court called you, when to report, and how to respond. Many courts first send a questionnaire to complete and return. Washoe County's district court, for example, asks jurors to keep the top portion marked "NOTICE TO EMPLOYER" and to have their badge number and birth date ready when they respond. A reporting card follows about 10 days before your date.

Check Whether You Still Need to Go

Trials settle or move all the time. Most courts give you a recorded phone line or a website to check the night before. Reno Municipal Court, for example, has jurors call 775-393-4500 for recorded instructions starting the Thursday night before. Reno Justice Court asks jurors to call 775-325-6522 the night before. If you are not needed, you may be moved to another day.

If You Do Not Respond

Ignoring a summons is a bad idea. Under NRS 6.040, a person who fails to attend can be ordered to appear and explain why. A person who cannot show good cause is in contempt of court and can be fined up to $500.

Postponing or Being Excused

Courts know life happens. Nevada law allows a judge or jury commissioner to excuse you for a time if you show:

- Sickness or disability.
- The serious illness or death of an immediate family member.
- Undue hardship or extreme inconvenience.

- Public necessity.
- You are the primary caregiver of a person with a documented medical condition.

A person with a permanent disability can ask to be permanently excused. Ask early, follow your court's instructions, and keep a copy of what you send.

Who Is Exempt

Under NRS 6.020, some people are exempt if they ask:

- Anyone 70 or older.
- Anyone 65 or older who lives 65 miles or more from the court.
- Legislators and legislative staff while the Legislature is in session.
- Certain peace officers.
- People in the state's confidential address program for victims.

Exempt means you may choose not to serve. You can still serve if you want to.

> **Try This** Put your reporting date, the court's address and the phone number for checking in on your calendar the day the summons arrives.

Chapter 3: Your Job, Your Pay and Your Rights

Your Employer Must Let You Serve

Nevada protects jurors at work. Under NRS 6.190, an employer may not fire you or threaten to fire you because you are serving on a jury. Doing so is a crime, and you can sue for lost wages, your job back, attorney's fees and punitive damages of up to $50,000. Your employer also may not make you use sick leave or vacation for jury service, or require you to work within eight hours before you report. Give your employer notice at least three days before you report.

The sources I read do not say your employer must keep paying you while you serve. Check your employer's policy.

What the Court Pays

Juror pay in Nevada is $65 a day for jurors who are sworn and serving, and for each day after the second day of jury selection, under NRS 6.150. Washoe County's district court and Reno Municipal Court both list $65 a day and say payment arrives in four to six weeks. Washoe's district court notes that jurors are paid "only if they are selected to serve."

Jurors who live 30 miles or more from the court get mileage, and lodging can be paid for those living 65 miles or more away when service lasts more than a day.

> **Watch for Old Pay Figures** Some court pages still list the old rate of $40 a day. The law and the courts' updated pages show $65.

How Long It Lasts

Many Nevada courts use a “one-day/one-trial” system. If you are not picked for a jury on your reporting day, you are usually done. If you are picked, you serve for that one trial. Washoe County and Reno Municipal Court both say the average trial lasts two to three days. Jury selection itself can take a few hours.

Washoe’s district court releases jurors from service for two years after they finish. Nevada law also says a person who actually served the year before should not be picked again unless there are not enough other jurors.

Chapter 4: Reporting Day

What to Bring

- Your summons or reporting card.
- A photo ID.
- A parking stub if the court validates parking.
- Water, a snack, and something to read. You may wait a while.

Leave glass containers and aerosol cans at home; Washoe's district court does not allow them. Do not bring children.

What to Wear

Dress as you would for a serious business meeting. Courts ask jurors not to wear shorts, tank tops, sweatpants or gym clothes, and Reno Municipal Court adds hats and flip-flops to the list. Avoid shirts with slogans or images that could offend.

Phones and Social Media

You will be told to silence your phone. Once you are on a case, you may not discuss it with anyone, look it up, or post about it. Reno Municipal Court states that social media is not permitted during service. A juror who researches a case on their own can cause a mistrial.

Checking In and Waiting

You will check in with the jury office and wait to be called. When a courtroom needs a jury, a group is sent up together. This group is called a panel or a pool.

Chapter 5: Jury Selection

Questions From the Judge and the Lawyers

Jury selection is the process of choosing a fair jury from the panel. The judge asks questions first. In Nevada civil trials, NRS 16.030 says the parties or their lawyers may then ask follow-up questions, which "must not be unreasonably restricted." This questioning is often called voir dire.

Questions might cover your job, whether you know anyone in the case, and whether you have strong feelings about the subject. Answer honestly. There are no right answers, only true ones.

Challenges for Cause

A juror can be removed for cause if there is a specific reason they may not be fair. In civil cases, Nevada law lists grounds such as being related to a party, having an interest in the outcome, having already formed an "unqualified opinion," or "enmity against or bias to either party." The judge decides.

Peremptory Challenges

Each side also gets a few challenges it can use without giving a reason. In a Nevada civil trial, "Each side is entitled to four peremptory challenges." Being excused this way is not a judgment about you.

How Many Jurors

A Nevada civil jury "must consist of eight persons, unless the parties consent to a lesser number," and never fewer than four. The court may also seat alternate jurors, who hear the whole case and step in if a juror cannot continue.

Chapter 6: How a Criminal Case Moves

A criminal case is brought by the government against a person accused of a crime. The government is represented by a prosecutor, such as the county district attorney or a city attorney. The person accused is the defendant.

Misdemeanors

For a misdemeanor, a less serious crime, the American Bar Association describes the first step as “an initial appearance (often referred to as an arraignment).” The charge is read, the defendant is told of the right to a lawyer, and the defendant enters a plea. If the plea is not guilty, a trial date is set, and bail is addressed.

Felonies

For a felony, a serious crime, there is usually an extra step. At the first appearance, “The defendant does NOT enter a plea.” Instead, a preliminary hearing is held, where the government must show there is enough evidence, called probable cause, to go forward. If it cannot, the case is dismissed. If it can, the case goes to the trial court. In some cases, a grand jury reviews the evidence instead.

Pleas and Plea Bargains

Many criminal cases never reach a jury. They end with a plea bargain, where the defendant pleads guilty in exchange for a lesser charge or a recommended sentence.

Trial and Verdict

If the case goes to trial, the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. That is the highest standard in law. The

defendant does not have to prove anything. If the jury finds the defendant guilty, the judge, not the jury, usually decides the sentence at a later hearing.

Chapter 7: How a Civil Case Moves

A civil case is a dispute between people, businesses or governments, usually over money or rights. The person who sues is the plaintiff. The person being sued is the defendant.

From Complaint to Trial

Lyon County's justice court describes it this way: a civil case begins when the plaintiff files a complaint, and the case can end in a judgment, "also called a decision or order." The parties can settle "at any stage." In between, each side gathers evidence, and many cases settle before trial.

In Nevada, justice courts hear most civil cases where the amount in dispute is $15,000 or less. Larger cases go to the district court.

The Order of a Civil Trial

NRS 16.090 sets the order of a civil jury trial in Nevada:

1. The jury is sworn.
2. Each side gives an opening statement.
3. The plaintiff presents evidence.
4. The defendant presents evidence.
5. Each side may offer rebuttal evidence.
6. The judge instructs the jury on the law, "before the argument begins."
7. The lawyers make closing arguments. "The plaintiff must commence and may conclude the argument."
8. The jury goes out to deliberate.

The Verdict

In a civil case, the plaintiff must usually prove the case by a preponderance of the evidence, meaning more likely true than not. Nevada civil juries do not have to be unanimous. Under NRS 16.190, if the jury is polled and "more than one-fourth of the jurors disagree," the jury is sent back to deliberate. In an eight-person jury, by my reading, that means at least six must agree.

Chapter 8: Small Claims Court

Small claims court is for people who want to sue for a modest amount of money without hiring a lawyer.

The Limit

Under NRS 73.010, Nevada small claims cases are for money only, up to $10,000. Lyon County's court page says the same: "Small Claims actions may be filed for the recovery of money only, in amounts up to $10,000.00."

How It Works

1. Find the right court, usually the justice court for the area where the dispute happened.
2. Fill out the small claims forms with the amount and the facts. Lyon County also requires a Civil Cover Sheet.
3. Pay the filing fee, which depends on the amount, or ask for a fee waiver if you cannot afford it.
4. Have the other side formally notified, called service of process.
5. Go to the hearing with your evidence and witnesses. Hearings typically take place 30 to 60 days after filing, according to the Nevada courts.
6. The judge decides.

Lawyers are not required, "although they are allowed if they choose." In most cases the judgment is final, with only limited appeals to the district court.

Help

Nevada's Civil Law Self-Help Center at civillawselfhelpcenter.org and Nevada Self Help at selfhelp.nvcourts.gov have forms and instructions.

Chapter 9: Who Is Who in the Courtroom

- **The judge** presides over the courtroom. With a jury, the judge rules on questions of law and instructs the jury. Without a jury, the judge also decides the facts and the verdict.
- **The jury** decides the facts. The Arizona Supreme Court's guide calls jurors "the heart of the judicial system in the United States."
- **The bailiff** keeps order, calls witnesses, takes charge of the jury as the judge directs, and makes sure no one tries to influence jurors.
- **The court clerk** handles exhibits and the administrative side of the trial, and often swears in jurors and witnesses.
- **The court reporter** records everything said word for word. Some courts use audio or video recording instead.
- **The prosecutor** represents the government in a criminal case.
- **The defense attorney** represents the defendant.
- **The plaintiff** brings a civil case; **the defendant** is the person sued or charged.
- **Witnesses** testify under oath about what they know.
- **An interpreter** helps people who do not speak English well.

The American Bar Association notes that lawyers are "officers of the court." Their job is to represent their clients zealously within the rules of professional conduct.

After the Trial When the trial ends, the judge will thank you and release you. You may then talk about the case if you choose, but you do not have to. Ask the jury office for a proof-of-service letter if your employer needs one.

Jury Duty Checklist

- ☐ I read my summons and returned any questionnaire.
- ☐ I told my employer at least three days before I report.
- ☐ I asked about postponement or exemption, if I need one, in writing.
- ☐ I checked the night before whether I still need to report.
- ☐ I have my summons or card, photo ID and parking stub.
- ☐ I dressed as for a business meeting.
- ☐ I will not discuss, research or post about the case.
- ☐ I asked for a proof-of-service letter for my employer.

Glossary

Alternate juror. A juror who hears the case and replaces a juror who cannot continue.

Arraignment. The court hearing where a criminal charge is read and a plea is entered.

Beyond a reasonable doubt. The standard of proof in a criminal case.

Challenge for cause. A request to remove a juror for a specific reason, such as bias.

Peremptory challenge. A limited right to remove a juror without giving a reason.

Plaintiff. The person who brings a civil case.

Preponderance of the evidence. The usual civil standard: more likely true than not.

Small claims. A simple court process for money claims up to $10,000 in Nevada.

Voir dire. The questioning of potential jurors.

Sources

These are the sources used for this book. Pages were read on November 18, 2026.

- Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapter 6 (Jurors), Chapter 16 (Trial juries in civil actions) and Chapter 73 (Small claims), leg.state.nv.us, revised April 15, 2026.
- Second Judicial District Court (Washoe County), Jury Commissioner's Office page.
- Reno Municipal Court, Jury Service Information.
- Reno Justice Court (Washoe County), Jury Service.
- Lyon County, Walker River Justice Court, "Civil Action" and "Small Claims Actions" pages.
- Supreme Court of Nevada, Administrative Office of the Courts, "Small Claims Court."
- American Bar Association, How Courts Work: "Pretrial Appearances" and "Court Officers."
- Arizona Supreme Court, "The Players in a Trial Courtroom" (general descriptions).
- RulesofCivilProcedure.com, Nevada jury duty summary (last reviewed November 3, 2026), used only to confirm the 2024 pay change.

About This Book

Jury Duty and the Courtroom, Step by Step is part of a set of free plain-language guides from Trinfinity Enterprises. Facts were checked as of November 18, 2026. If you find something that has changed or needs correcting, please write to andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.