

**Proposed Model Jury Instructions
The Use of Electronic Technology to Learn
or Communicate about a Case**

Prepared by the Judicial Conference Committee on
Court Administration and Case Management
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[Note: These instructions should be provided to jurors at the indicated trial stage or as necessary over the course of jury selection and trial.]

During Voir Dire of Potential Jurors:

If you are selected as a juror in this case, you cannot discuss the case with your fellow jurors before you are permitted to do so at the conclusion of the trial, or with anyone else until after a decision has been reached by the jury. Therefore, you cannot talk about the case or otherwise have any communications about the case with anyone, including your fellow jurors, until I tell you that such discussions may take place. Thus, in addition to not having face-to-face discussions with your fellow jurors or anyone else, you cannot communicate with anyone about the case in any way, whether in writing, or through email, text messaging, blogs, or comments, or on social media websites and apps (like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Snapchat). [OPTIONAL: If you feel that you cannot do this, then you cannot let yourself become a member of the jury in this case. Is there anyone who will not be able to comply with this restriction?]

You also cannot conduct any type of independent or personal research or investigation regarding any matters related to this case. Therefore, you cannot use your cellphones, iPads, computers or any other device to do any research or investigation regarding this case, the matters in the case, the legal issues in the case, or the individuals or other entities involved in the case. And you must ignore any information about the case you might see, even accidentally, while browsing the internet or on your social media feeds. This is because you must base the decisions you will have to make in this case solely on what you hear and see in this courtroom. [OPTIONAL: If you feel that you cannot do this, then you cannot let yourself become a member of the jury in this case. Is there anyone who will not be able to comply with this restriction?]

Before Trial:

The Sixth Amendment of our Constitution guarantees a trial by an impartial jury. This means that, as jurors, you must decide this case based solely on the evidence and law presented to you here in this courtroom. Until all the evidence and arguments have been presented and you begin to deliberate, you may not discuss this case with anyone, even your fellow jurors. After you start to deliberate, you may discuss the case, the evidence, and the law as it has been presented, but only with your fellow jurors. You cannot discuss it with anyone else until you have returned a verdict and the case has come to an end. I'll now walk through some specific examples of what this means.

First, this means that, during the trial, you must not conduct any independent research about this case, or the matters, legal issues, individuals, or other entities involved in this case. Just as you must not search or review any traditional sources of information about this case (such as dictionaries, reference materials, or television news or entertainment programs), you also must not search the internet or any

other electronic resources for information about this case or the witnesses or parties involved in it. The bottom line for the important work you will be doing is that you must base your verdict only on the evidence presented in this courtroom, along with instructions on the law that I will provide.

Second, this means that you must not communicate about the case with anyone, including your family and friends, until deliberations, when you will discuss the case with only other jurors. During deliberations, you must continue not to communicate about the case with anyone else. Most of us use smartphones, tablets, or computers in our daily lives to access the internet, for information, and to participate in social media platforms. To remain impartial jurors, however, you must not communicate with anyone about this case, whether in person, in writing, or through email, text messaging, blogs, or social media websites and apps (like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Snapchat).

Please note that these restrictions are about *all* kinds of communications about this case, even those that are not directed at any particular person or group. Communications like blog posts or tweets can be shared to an ever-expanding circle of people and can have an unexpected impact on this trial. For example, a post you make to your social media account might be viewable by a witness who is not supposed to know what has happened in this courtroom before he or she has testified. For these reasons, you must inform me immediately if you learn about or share any information about the case outside of this courtroom, even if by accident, or if you discover that another juror has done so.

Finally, a word about an even newer challenge for trials such as this one—persons, entities, and even foreign governments may seek to manipulate your opinions, or your impartiality during deliberations, using the communications I’ve already discussed or using fake social media accounts. But these misinformation efforts might also be undertaken through targeted advertising online or in social media. Many of the tools you use to access email, social media, and the internet display third-party notifications, pop-ups, or ads while you are using them. These communications may be intended to persuade you or your community on an issue, and could influence you in your service as a juror in this case. For example, while accessing your email, social media, or the internet, through no fault of your own, you might see popups containing information about this case or the matters, legal principles, individuals or other entities involved in this case. Please be aware of this possibility, ignore any pop-ups or ads that might be relevant to what we are doing here, and certainly do not click through to learn more if these notifications or ads appear. If this happens, you must let me know.

Because it is so important to the parties’ rights that you decide this case based solely on the evidence and my instructions on the law, at the beginning of each day, I may ask you whether you have learned about or shared any information outside of this courtroom. (I like to let the jury know in advance that I may be doing that, so you are prepared for the question.)

I hope that for all of you this case is interesting and noteworthy.

At the End of Each Day of the Case:

As I indicated before this trial started, you as jurors will decide this case based solely on the evidence presented in this courtroom. This means that, after you leave here for the night, you must not conduct any independent research about this case, the matters in the case, the legal issues in the case, or the individuals or other entities involved in the case. This is important for the same reasons that jurors

have long been instructed to limit their exposure to traditional forms of media and information such as television and newspapers. You also must not communicate with anyone, in any way, about this case. And you must ignore any information about the case that you might see while browsing the internet or your social media feeds.

At the Beginning of Each Day of the Case:

As I reminded you last night and continue to emphasize to you today, it is important that you decide this case based solely on the evidence and the law presented here. So you must not learn any additional information about the case from sources outside the courtroom. To ensure fairness to all parties in this trial, I will now ask each of you whether you have learned about or shared any information about this case outside of this courtroom, even if it was accidental.

ALTERNATIVE 1 (in open court): If you think you might have done so, please let me know now by raising your hand. [Wait for a show of hands]. I see no raised hands; however, if you would prefer to talk to a member of the court's staff privately in response to this question, please do so at the next break. Thank you for your careful adherence to my instructions.

ALTERNATIVE 2 (during voir dire with each juror, individually): Have you learned about or shared any information about this case outside of this courtroom? . . . Thank you for your careful adherence to my instructions.

At the Close of the Case:

Throughout your deliberations, you may discuss with each other the evidence and the law that has been presented in this case, but you must not communicate with anyone else by any means about the case. You also cannot learn from outside sources about the case, the matters in the case, the legal issues in the case, or individuals or other entities involved in the case. This means you may not use any electronic device or media (such as a phone, computer, or tablet), the internet, any text or instant messaging service, or any social media apps (such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Snapchat) to research or communicate about what you've seen and heard in this courtroom.

These restrictions continue during deliberations because it is essential, under our Constitution, that you decide this case based solely on the evidence and law presented in this courtroom. Information you find on the internet or through social media might be incomplete, misleading, or inaccurate. And, as I noted in my instructions at the start of the trial, even using your smartphones, tablets, and computers - and the news and social media apps on those devices - may inadvertently expose you to certain notices, such as pop-ups or advertisements, that could influence your consideration of the matters you've heard about in this courtroom.

You are permitted to discuss the case with only your fellow jurors during deliberations because they have seen and heard the same evidence and instructions on the law that you have, and it is important that you decide this case solely on the evidence presented during the trial, without undue influence by anything or anyone outside of the courtroom. For this reason, I expect you to inform me at the earliest opportunity, should you learn about or share any information about this case outside of this courtroom or the jury room, or learn that another juror has done so.