

Using a Tablet in Court

I'm thinking that I want to try to use a tablet in court, especially on brief items like motion hearings, rather than carrying a stack of papers around. Also, because of my vision, I can actually read a computer screen better than paper.

Does anyone know of a tablet that is made without cameras?

Thank you and regards,

Why no camera?

Andrew Mays, Illinois

No camera in courtroom.

Joseph G. Bonanno, Massachusetts

Check with the court. You either may be able to exempt your device (as an attorney or as an attorney or as an ADA accommodation), or you may be able to place a piece of aluminum tape over the lens to qualify as no camera.

Roger Traversa, Pennsylvania

I do not think the Court will have an issue with you using a tablet, even if it has a camera, instead of paper. So long as you are not taking pictures in the Court room.

Phil A. Taylor, Massachusetts

Have you asked the court for permission to use a tablet on the condition that you don't use the camera?

Also, I know that at least some of the non-Fire Kindles can read PDFs but don't have cameras. However, I am not sure how good they actually work as PDF readers.

Bert Krages, Oregon

I can recall buying Blackberries without cameras for just that reason. No cameras in the courtroom. But, today, really? Virtually all smartphones have cameras and judges, even in the rural area where I practice, expect lawyers to have their calendar available on their phones.

David Masters, Colorado

No computers allowed in the federal court in Richmond. That includes phones. When they were allowed, I ran a practice off an HTC Evo in court. I had access to my files when I needed them.

Mitchell P. Goldstein, Virginia

I have been using my iPad for motion hearings for the last year or so in California and have not had a problem with the camera thing. I put all the relevant documents for that hearing (e.g. proof of service) in to a dedicated Dropbox folder the night before the hearing and sync the iPad.

The Dropbox iOS app has a function where you can download a PDF to the iPad itself so that it is available offline. I do that and can pull stuff up during court very easily. It makes it a bit awkward if I need to show something to the judge, but that's pretty rare.

In state court in California, there is a prohibition on bringing cameras to court, but I have only ever had that enforced against actual cameras (e.g. point and shoot camera, DSLR camera, etc) and never on a device that happened to have a camera in it (e.g. smartphone). Taking a strict view on cameras would be pretty stupid, I think, for the reasons that David Masters mentions -- nearly every lawyer I see in court maintains their calendar on a smartphone and every smartphone I have ever seen has at least one camera in it.

Some judges will actually explicitly say that you're not allowed to use your phone in the courtroom at all. This is addressed to everyone, but the judge then says something like 'You may see lawyers using their smartphones. This is fine because as officers of the court they need to access their calendars.'

Andy I. Chen, California

When I see "because of my vision," I immediately think, "ADA accommodation"...

FWIW,

Richard J. Rutledge, Jr., North Carolina