

14-9002. Children's court; explanation of trial procedure.

MEMBERS OF THE JURY:

This is a children's court proceeding in which the State of New Mexico has filed a petition against the respondent _____ (*name of child*) alleging that _____ (*child*) has committed a delinquent act.

In children's court, the respondent is referred to as a child. A child is any person under the age of eighteen (18) years. Persons under eighteen (18) years are not charged with crimes, but rather delinquent acts.

A delinquent act is any act that would be a crime if committed by an adult. The child in this case _____ (*name of child*) is alleged to have committed the delinquent act of _____ (*common name of crime*). _____ (*name of child*) has denied committing the delinquent act. The child is presumed to be innocent. The state has the burden to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that _____ (*name of child*) committed the delinquent act charged in the petition.

What I say now is an introduction to the trial of this case.

The children's court proceeding generally begins with the lawyers telling you what they expect the evidence to show. Next, the evidence will be presented to you. The evidence will be the testimony of witnesses, exhibits, and any facts agreed to by the lawyers. After you have heard all the evidence, I will instruct you on the law. The lawyers will argue the case, and then you will retire to the jury room to arrive at a verdict.

Your purpose as jurors is to find and determine the facts in this case from the evidence. It is my duty to decide what evidence you may consider.

It is the duty of a lawyer to object to evidence the lawyer believes may not be proper, and you must not hold the objection against the state or the respondent [because of such objections]. I will sustain objections if it is improper for you to consider the evidence. If I sustain an objection to evidence, you must not consider that evidence nor may you consider any evidence which I have told you to disregard. You must not speculate about what would be the answer to a question which I rule cannot be answered.

It is for you to decide whether the witnesses know what they are talking about and whether they are being truthful. You may give the testimony of any witness whatever weight you believe it merits.

You must decide the case solely upon the evidence received in court. You must not consider anything you may have read or heard about the case outside the courtroom. During the trial and your deliberations, you must avoid news accounts of the trial, whether they be on radio or television or in the newspaper or other written publications. You must not visit the scene of the incident on your own. You cannot make experiments with reference to the case.

Until you retire to deliberate the case, you must not discuss this case or the evidence with anyone, even with each other. It is important that you keep an open mind and not decide any part of the case until the entire case has been completed and submitted to you. Your special responsibility as jurors demands that throughout this trial you exercise your judgment impartially and without regard to any biases or prejudices that you may have.

[You are not permitted to take notes during the trial. In your deliberations you must rely on your individual memories of the evidence in the case.]²

[You are permitted to take notes during trial, and the court will provide you with note taking material if you wish to take them. However, if you choose to take notes, be sure that your note taking does not interfere with your listening to and considering all the evidence. It is difficult to take notes and at the same time pay attention to what a witness is saying. In your deliberations, you should rely on your own memory of the evidence rather than on the written notes of another juror. Do not take your notes with you at the end of the day or discuss them with anyone before you begin your deliberations.]³

If an exhibit is admitted in evidence, you should examine it yourself and not talk about it with other jurors until you retire to deliberate.

Ordinarily, the attorneys will develop all pertinent evidence. It is the exception rather than the rule that an individual juror will find themselves with a question unanswered after the testimony is presented. However, should this occur, you may write out the question and ask the bailiff to hand it to me. Your name as juror should appear below the question. I must first pass upon the propriety of the question before it can be asked in open court. The question will be asked if I deem the question to be proper.

No statement, ruling, remark, or comment which I make during the course of the trial is intended to indicate my opinion about how you should decide the case or to influence you in any way. At times, I may ask questions of witnesses. If I do, these questions do not in any way indicate my opinion about the facts or indicate the weight I feel you should give to the testimony of the witness.

The prosecuting attorney will now make an opening statement if the prosecuting attorney desires. The child's attorney may make an opening statement if the child's attorney desires or may wait until later in the trial to do so.

What is said in the opening statement is not evidence. The opening statement is simply the lawyer's opportunity to tell you what the lawyer expects the evidence to show.

USE NOTES

1. For use after the jury is sworn and before opening statements. This instruction does not go to the jury room.
 2. This instruction leaves it to the discretion of the trial judge about whether or not jurors will be permitted to take notes during the trial.
 3. If the court permits the taking of notes, the court must instruct the bailiff to pick up the notes at the conclusion of all jury deliberations. Absent a showing of good cause, the court shall destroy all notes at the conclusion of all jury deliberations.
- [As amended, effective August 1, 1989; August 1, 2001; as amended by Supreme Court Order No. S-1-RCR-2025-00126, effective for all cases pending or filed on or after December 31, 2025.]