



**Kiser's Legal Support Solutions**

# **LEGAL TERMINOLOGY GUIDE**

A plain-English guide to court, deposition, transcript, exhibit, and legal support language.

**Designed for attorneys, legal teams, agencies, witnesses, and self-represented litigants who need the process explained clearly - without the fog.**

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# How to Use This Guide

Legal language can make a simple proceeding feel heavier than it has to be. This guide gives you a clean working understanding of terms you may hear when scheduling court reporting, attending a deposition, reviewing a transcript, or preparing for a hearing.

## Important scope note

This guide is educational only and does not provide legal advice. Laws, court rules, local practices, court orders, and case-specific instructions can vary. When a term affects rights, deadlines, evidence, testimony, or strategy, ask your attorney or contact the court for official guidance.

Best use: keep this guide nearby before a proceeding, while reviewing notices, and when ordering transcript or legal support services.

## Inside This Guide

- Court and case basics
- People in the proceeding
- Discovery and deposition terms
- Transcript and court reporting terms
- Evidence and exhibit terms
- Common motions and hearings
- Remote and technology terms
- Transcript ordering language
- Quick preparation checklists
- Terms people often mix up
- A-Z quick reference

# The Legal Proceeding Roadmap

Most legal matters feel less overwhelming once you understand the basic flow. Not every case follows this exact path, but these are common stages where clear communication and a clean record matter.

|   |                         |                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Case starts             | A complaint, petition, motion, notice, or agency request begins the matter or sets the next event.                                                                  |
| 2 | Notice and scheduling   | Parties coordinate hearing dates, deposition dates, deadlines, remote links, witness needs, and court reporting coverage.                                           |
| 3 | Information gathering   | Discovery, document exchange, depositions, subpoenas, and exhibit planning may occur before a final hearing or trial.                                               |
| 4 | Proceeding happens      | The court reporter or legal support professional captures the proceeding, appearance information, witness testimony, objections, exhibits, and record instructions. |
| 5 | Transcript ordered      | The requesting party selects the transcript type, turnaround, delivery method, and any special instructions.                                                        |
| 6 | Delivery and next steps | The transcript may be filed, reviewed, used for motions, prepared for appeal, or kept for the case record.                                                          |

## KLS clarity rule

The cleaner the request, the cleaner the coverage. Send the notice, case caption, start time, estimated length, remote link or address, witness names, and transcript expectations as early as possible.

# 1. Court and Case Basics

These are the foundational words that appear in notices, pleadings, court orders, and scheduling communications.

| Term                        | Plain-English meaning                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Action / Case</b>        | A legal matter filed with a court. People may say case, lawsuit, matter, or action depending on the setting.                                                          |
| <b>Civil case</b>           | A dispute between people, businesses, agencies, or organizations, usually involving rights, money, property, contracts, family matters, or other non-criminal issues. |
| <b>Criminal case</b>        | A case brought by the government alleging that a law was violated. Possible results can include fines, probation, incarceration, or other penalties.                  |
| <b>Complaint / Petition</b> | A document that starts a case and tells the court what the filing party is asking for.                                                                                |
| <b>Answer / Response</b>    | A filed response to a complaint, petition, or motion. It usually admits, denies, or responds to statements made by the other side.                                    |
| <b>Motion</b>               | A written or oral request asking the court to take action or make a ruling.                                                                                           |
| <b>Order</b>                | A written direction or ruling from the judge. Orders control deadlines, responsibilities, restrictions, and next steps.                                               |
| <b>Hearing</b>              | A court session where the judge may hear argument, receive evidence, question parties, or decide a specific issue.                                                    |
| <b>Trial</b>                | A formal proceeding where evidence and testimony are presented so a judge or jury can decide disputed issues.                                                         |
| <b>Judgment</b>             | The court's final decision or formal result on one or more issues in the case.                                                                                        |
| <b>Appeal</b>               | A request for a higher court to review a lower court's decision. Appeals are deadline-driven and rule-heavy.                                                          |

## 2. People in the Proceeding

Knowing each person's role makes a courtroom, deposition, or remote proceeding much easier to follow.

| Term                             | Plain-English meaning                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Plaintiff</b>                 | The party who brings a civil lawsuit.                                                                                                             |
| <b>Defendant</b>                 | The party being sued in a civil case or accused in a criminal case.                                                                               |
| <b>Petitioner</b>                | The party who files a petition asking the court for relief or action.                                                                             |
| <b>Respondent</b>                | The party responding to a petition.                                                                                                               |
| <b>Counsel / Attorney</b>        | A lawyer representing a party or advising a client.                                                                                               |
| <b>Pro se / Self-represented</b> | A person participating in a case without an attorney.                                                                                             |
| <b>Judge</b>                     | The official who presides over the court proceeding and makes rulings.                                                                            |
| <b>Clerk</b>                     | Court staff responsible for maintaining court records, filings, and administrative case information.                                              |
| <b>Witness</b>                   | A person who gives testimony about what they know, saw, heard, did, reviewed, or observed.                                                        |
| <b>Deponent</b>                  | The witness giving sworn testimony in a deposition.                                                                                               |
| <b>Court reporter</b>            | A trained professional who captures the proceeding and prepares the official or certified transcript when ordered.                                |
| <b>Interpreter</b>               | A qualified person who interprets spoken language for a party, witness, or participant who needs language access.                                 |
| <b>Guardian ad litem</b>         | A court-appointed person, often an attorney, assigned to represent or protect the interests of a child or another person as ordered by the court. |

### 3. Discovery and Deposition Terms

Discovery is the information-gathering phase. Depositions are one of the most common reasons a court reporter is scheduled.

| Term                          | Plain-English meaning                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Discovery</b>              | The process used to exchange, request, and obtain information before trial or a final hearing.                                      |
| <b>Deposition</b>             | Sworn testimony taken outside the courtroom, usually before trial, with a court reporter present to make a record.                  |
| <b>Notice of deposition</b>   | A document stating when, where, how, and for whom a deposition will take place.                                                     |
| <b>Subpoena</b>               | A formal command requiring a person to appear, testify, or produce documents or other items.                                        |
| <b>Subpoena duces tecum</b>   | A subpoena requiring a person to bring or produce documents, records, or tangible things.                                           |
| <b>Interrogatories</b>        | Written questions served by one party that another party must answer under the applicable rules.                                    |
| <b>Request for production</b> | A written request asking another party to provide documents, records, photos, files, or other materials.                            |
| <b>Request for admission</b>  | A written request asking a party to admit or deny specific statements or facts.                                                     |
| <b>Objection</b>              | A statement that a question, request, evidence, or procedure is improper or should be limited under the rules.                      |
| <b>Stipulation</b>            | An agreement between the parties or attorneys, often stated on the record.                                                          |
| <b>Confidentiality</b>        | A restriction on how certain information may be used or shared. Follow the court order, protective order, or attorney instructions. |

## 4. Transcript and Court Reporting Terms

These terms help clients understand what they are ordering and what the court reporter needs to produce a clean, usable record.

| Term                        | Plain-English meaning                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Appearance coverage</b>  | The court reporter's attendance for the scheduled proceeding, whether or not a transcript is ordered.                                             |
| <b>Proceedings</b>          | The hearing, deposition, trial, arbitration, or legal event being recorded or reported.                                                           |
| <b>The record</b>           | The official captured content of what was said or done during the proceeding.                                                                     |
| <b>On the record</b>        | The portion of the proceeding being captured for the transcript.                                                                                  |
| <b>Off the record</b>       | A break or discussion not intended to be included in the transcript. The reporter follows the direction given on site or remotely.                |
| <b>Read back</b>            | A request for the court reporter to read back a portion of testimony or proceedings.                                                              |
| <b>Certified transcript</b> | A transcript completed and certified by the reporter or authorized professional as a true and accurate record, according to applicable standards. |
| <b>Original transcript</b>  | The main certified transcript ordered by the requesting party.                                                                                    |
| <b>Copy transcript</b>      | An additional certified or conformed copy provided to another authorized party.                                                                   |
| <b>Rough draft</b>          | A preliminary, unfinished transcript that is not final or certified unless expressly stated otherwise.                                            |
| <b>Errata sheet</b>         | A form used by a witness to list requested changes or corrections after reviewing deposition testimony, subject to the governing rules.           |
| <b>Turnaround</b>           | The requested delivery timeline for a transcript, such as regular, expedited, daily, or rush service.                                             |
| <b>Page rate</b>            | The per-page charge used to calculate transcript cost.                                                                                            |

### Transcript production tip

Names, spellings, agency titles, acronyms, medical terms, technical language, and exhibit labels should be confirmed before delivery whenever possible. A strong record is built from both clean capture and clean details.

## 5. Evidence and Exhibit Terms

Evidence language can sound technical, but the heart of it is simple: what information can be considered and how it gets placed before the court or witness.

| Term                             | Plain-English meaning                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Evidence</b>                  | Information presented to prove, disprove, explain, or support a fact or issue.                                                        |
| <b>Exhibit</b>                   | A document, photo, record, object, or file used during testimony or presented to the court.                                           |
| <b>Marked for identification</b> | An item has been labeled as an exhibit so people can refer to it clearly. That does not always mean it has been admitted as evidence. |
| <b>Admitted</b>                  | The judge has accepted the evidence for consideration in the proceeding.                                                              |
| <b>Authentication</b>            | Showing that an item is what the offering party claims it is.                                                                         |
| <b>Foundation</b>                | Preliminary testimony or facts needed before evidence may be considered.                                                              |
| <b>Hearsay</b>                   | An out-of-court statement offered to prove the truth of what it says. Whether it is allowed depends on rules and exceptions.          |
| <b>Privilege</b>                 | A legal protection that may allow certain communications or information to be withheld.                                               |
| <b>Redaction</b>                 | Removing or hiding sensitive information before a document is shared or filed.                                                        |
| <b>Bates number</b>              | A unique number or label placed on pages of documents to keep large productions organized.                                            |



## 6. Common Motions and Hearing Terms

These terms often show up on calendars, notices, and court orders. The name of the event does not always tell you how long it will last, so ask for estimated time when booking coverage.

| Term                       | Plain-English meaning                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Continuance</b>         | A postponement or request to move a proceeding to a later date.                                                    |
| <b>Motion to compel</b>    | A request asking the court to require a party or person to provide discovery, testimony, documents, or compliance. |
| <b>Motion in limine</b>    | A pretrial request asking the court to allow, limit, or exclude certain evidence before it is presented.           |
| <b>Status conference</b>   | A court meeting to discuss case progress, scheduling, deadlines, or pending issues.                                |
| <b>Pretrial conference</b> | A meeting before trial to organize issues, exhibits, witnesses, settlement posture, or trial logistics.            |
| <b>Show cause</b>          | A request or order requiring someone to appear and explain why the court should not take a certain action.         |
| <b>Bench trial</b>         | A trial decided by a judge instead of a jury.                                                                      |
| <b>Jury trial</b>          | A trial where a jury hears evidence and reaches a verdict under the court's instructions.                          |
| <b>Proffer</b>             | A summary or offer of what evidence or testimony would show if allowed.                                            |
| <b>Voir dire</b>           | Questioning used to evaluate potential jurors, witnesses, or experts, depending on the context.                    |

## 7. Remote and Technology Terms

Remote proceedings run best when the platform, exhibits, witness location, and backup plan are handled before the start time.

| Term                      | Plain-English meaning                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Remote proceeding</b>  | A hearing, deposition, meeting, or testimony session held by video or audio platform instead of everyone being in the same room. |
| <b>Hybrid proceeding</b>  | A proceeding where some people appear in person and others appear remotely.                                                      |
| <b>Platform host</b>      | The person or provider responsible for opening the remote room, managing access, and handling technical controls.                |
| <b>Breakout room</b>      | A private virtual room used for attorney-client conferences, witness preparation, or side discussions.                           |
| <b>Electronic exhibit</b> | A digital document, image, file, or record used as an exhibit during a remote or paperless proceeding.                           |
| <b>Screen share</b>       | Displaying a document, exhibit, or application on the video platform so other participants can see it.                           |
| <b>Timestamp</b>          | A marker showing when something occurred in the recording, notes, or transcript workflow.                                        |
| <b>Backup recording</b>   | A secondary recording used to protect the record if the primary capture has a technical issue.                                   |
| <b>Audio check</b>        | A short test before the proceeding to confirm microphones, speakers, recording levels, and participant names.                    |

## 8. Transcript Ordering and Delivery Terms

These terms help prevent quote confusion, deadline problems, and avoidable back-and-forth after the proceeding ends.

| Term                            | Plain-English meaning                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Regular delivery</b>         | A standard transcript delivery timeline. Always confirm the requested date when scheduling or ordering.                                           |
| <b>Expedited delivery</b>       | A faster-than-regular transcript request, usually priced at a higher rate because it requires priority production.                                |
| <b>Daily copy</b>               | A transcript delivery request where the transcript is prepared very quickly, often overnight or by the next day, when available.                  |
| <b>Rush request</b>             | An urgent transcript request with a short delivery window. Availability depends on schedule, page volume, audio quality, and production capacity. |
| <b>Minimum transcript order</b> | A minimum charge that may apply when the transcript has a small page count or the production time outweighs the page volume.                      |
| <b>ASCII / text file</b>        | A plain-text version of a transcript or rough draft used for searching, import, or litigation-support workflows when available.                   |
| <b>PDF transcript</b>           | A digital transcript file, often delivered as a secure PDF depending on client instructions and payment policies.                                 |
| <b>Word index</b>               | A list of selected words and where they appear in the transcript, when generated or requested.                                                    |
| <b>Exhibit index</b>            | A list identifying exhibits mentioned, marked, or admitted during the proceeding, depending on the record and transcript format.                  |
| <b>Certificate page</b>         | The reporter's statement certifying the transcript according to applicable standards and the record captured.                                     |

## 9. Terms People Often Mix Up

These pairs are easy to confuse. The difference matters when scheduling, ordering, or preparing for a proceeding.

| Term                                        | Plain-English meaning                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Hearing vs. Trial</b>                    | A hearing usually addresses one or more specific issues. A trial is a full presentation of evidence to decide disputed claims or charges.   |
| <b>Marked vs. Admitted</b>                  | An exhibit may be marked so everyone can identify it. It is admitted only if accepted into evidence under the applicable rules.             |
| <b>Original vs. Copy</b>                    | An original is the primary certified transcript order. A copy is an additional transcript provided to another authorized party.             |
| <b>Rough Draft vs. Certified Transcript</b> | A rough draft is preliminary and not final. A certified transcript is completed, reviewed, and certified according to applicable standards. |
| <b>On the Record vs. Off the Record</b>     | On the record is captured for the transcript. Off the record is generally not included unless otherwise directed or required.               |
| <b>Appearance Fee vs. Transcript Fee</b>    | Appearance coverage pays for the reporter's attendance. Transcript charges are tied to transcript preparation and delivery.                 |
| <b>Subpoena vs. Notice</b>                  | A notice informs parties of a scheduled deposition or event. A subpoena commands a person to appear, testify, or produce items.             |
| <b>Remote Hosted vs. Client Hosted</b>      | Remote hosted means the reporting provider manages the platform or room. Client hosted means the client supplies and manages the platform.  |

## 10. A-Z Quick Reference

A fast-reference list for common legal support conversations.

| Term                | Plain-English meaning                                                                       |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Affidavit</b>    | A written statement sworn or affirmed to be true.                                           |
| <b>Appearance</b>   | A party's participation in a case or a professional's attendance at a proceeding.           |
| <b>Caption</b>      | The case heading showing court, parties, case number, and related identifying information.  |
| <b>Certificate</b>  | A formal statement confirming completion, accuracy, service, or another required fact.      |
| <b>Citation</b>     | A reference to legal authority, a case, statute, rule, or source.                           |
| <b>Docket</b>       | The court's list or schedule of filings, hearings, and case activity.                       |
| <b>Ex parte</b>     | A request or communication involving one side only, allowed only in specific circumstances. |
| <b>File-stamped</b> | Marked by the court clerk to show a document was filed.                                     |

| Term                    | Plain-English meaning                                                                               |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Jurisdiction</b>     | The court's legal authority to hear a case or make a decision.                                      |
| <b>Minute order</b>     | A short court order or entry reflecting what occurred or was decided.                               |
| <b>Notice</b>           | A formal communication telling parties about a filing, hearing, deposition, or required action.     |
| <b>Protective order</b> | A court order limiting disclosure, use, or handling of certain information, documents, or evidence. |
| <b>Service</b>          | The required delivery of documents to a party or person under the rules.                            |
| <b>Testimony</b>        | Statements made under oath or affirmation.                                                          |
| <b>Transcript</b>       | The written record of spoken testimony or proceedings.                                              |
| <b>Venue</b>            | The proper location or court where a case is heard.                                                 |

# 11. What to Send When Booking Services

When the right details arrive early, everyone walks in better prepared. Copy and paste this list into your request email or booking form.

- Your name, firm/agency/company, phone number, and email address.
- Proceeding date, start time, estimated end time, and time zone if remote.
- Service needed: court reporting, legal transcription, transcript order, notary, remote support, or another legal support service.
- Court or deposition location, including full address, courtroom, parking instructions, or remote platform details.
- Full case name, case number, court level, county/city, and judge if known.
- Witness names, party names, attorney names, interpreter needs, and expected attendees.
- Transcript turnaround requested: regular, expedited, daily, rush, or no transcript expected yet.
- Exhibit handling plan: paper, electronic, platform-based, or no exhibits expected.
- Any confidentiality, protective order, special audio, recording, or access instructions that affect the proceeding.

## Booking shortcut

For court reporting, legal transcription, transcript preparation, remote deposition support, notary services, and related legal support services, contact Kiser's Legal Support Solutions at 571-758-4722 or [info@sklss.net](mailto:info@sklss.net).

## 12. Before the Proceeding

A clean record begins before the first question is asked. Use this page as a simple readiness check.

### For attorneys, legal teams, and agencies

- Send the notice of deposition, hearing notice, court order, or scheduling email as early as possible.
- Confirm whether the matter is in person, remote, or hybrid.
- Confirm who will swear in the witness and whether a notary is required.
- Provide remote links, access codes, courthouse address, courtroom, security instructions, and parking details.
- Prepare exhibit files with clean names, correct page order, and clear numbering.
- Tell participants to state their appearances clearly on the record.
- Reduce background noise and make sure each speaker has working audio.
- Identify confidential matters or sealed-record concerns before the proceeding begins.

### For witnesses and participants

- Join early if the proceeding is remote.
- Use a quiet room, stable internet, and a working microphone.
- Speak clearly, wait for questions to finish, and avoid talking over others.
- State your name clearly when asked to identify yourself.
- Keep exhibits or documents nearby if your attorney instructed you to do so.

## 13. When Ordering a Transcript

A transcript order is easier and faster when the production team has the right information from the start.

- Identify the date of proceeding and the exact matter or witness name.
- State whether you need the original transcript, a certified copy, a rough draft, or a combination.
- Provide the requested delivery deadline and any filing, hearing, appeal, or motion date tied to that deadline.
- Confirm spellings for proper names, technical terms, medical terms, business names, and addresses.
- State whether you need exhibits listed, attached, linked, or handled separately.
- Confirm delivery instructions, invoice recipient, billing contact, and any required purchase order or agency reference.

### **Need professional court reporting or legal support coverage?**

Kiser's Legal Support Solutions provides court reporting, legal transcription, transcript preparation, remote deposition support, notary services, and related legal support services throughout Virginia, Northern Virginia, the DMV, and surrounding areas.

**[www.SKLOSS.net](http://www.SKLOSS.net) | [info@sklss.net](mailto:info@sklss.net) | 571-758-4722**



## 14. Sources, Scope, and Legal Disclaimer

This guide uses plain-language explanations for educational and client-service purposes. Definitions are simplified for clarity and are not intended to replace statutes, court rules, local rules, court orders, attorney advice, or official legal definitions.

Some terms may have different meanings depending on jurisdiction, case type, procedural posture, or context. Always follow the applicable court rule, court order, attorney instruction, or official source for your specific matter.

### **Helpful public reference sources used for cross-checking terminology include:**

United States Courts, Glossary of Legal Terms - <https://www.uscourts.gov/glossary>

U.S. Department of Justice, Justice 101 Legal Terms Glossary - <https://www.justice.gov/usao/justice-101/glossary>

Cornell Legal Information Institute, Wex Legal Dictionary and Encyclopedia - <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex>

Virginia Judicial System, Glossary of Terms Commonly Used in Court - [https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/overview/glossary\\_of\\_court\\_terms](https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/overview/glossary_of_court_terms)

#### **Important reminder**

Kiser's Legal Support Solutions provides court reporting, transcript, notary, and legal support services. This guide does not create an attorney-client relationship and does not provide legal advice.

## **From confusion to confidence - that is the value of clear language.**