

Skype for Business

Videoconferencing for Virtual Courts

The New York State Unified Court System has been using Skype for Business (SfB) for both internal videoconferencing and remote video appearances. This question and answer guide is for court employees and external parties, such as attorneys, litigants, and witnesses who will be joining a virtual court videoconferencing call.

Q1. What are the **minimum requirements** for participating a SfB videoconferencing call?

A1. You must have a decent computer or smartphone with an up-to-date operating system, and high-speed Internet connections.

Q2. I don't have a **Microsoft Office365 Account**, can I join a SfB videoconferencing call?

A2. Yes, you can still fully participate in a SfB video call from a web browser without paying for a license.

Q3. Why is it important to have a decent computer with an up-to-date **operating system**?

A3. Videoconferencing requires more computer horsepower than regular applications, such as a word processor. Obsolete Operating Systems, such as Windows 7, not only have security holes, but also may exhibit unpredictable behavior when joining a Skype call.

Q4. Can I join a SfB videoconference call without a **webcam**?

A4. Yes, you can join the SfB meeting even if you don't have a webcam. People can hear you but, they cannot see you, which is not desirable in most court proceedings.

Q5. What would you recommend for the **audio**?

A5. We recommend the use of a USB headset. You may use an external speakerphone or built-in speaker and microphone within your device. However, it might pick up background noises. In those cases, you should sit close to the microphone.

Q6. How can I know my **Internet connection** is good enough for a SfB video call?

A6. For most people, broadband connections from common service providers, such as Spectrum, Cablevision Lightpath (Xfinity), or Verizon Fios are more than enough to support Skype video calls. Because you will be competing for the same bandwidth with other people working, learning and entertaining from home, you may experience video lag and pixelization. This internet traffic congestion should clear up by itself after a few seconds, so please be patient. Connecting your computer with an ethernet cable to a network port in your router should give you better performance than a Wi-Fi connection.

Q7. How can I prepare myself for the SfB video calls?

A7. It is very important to do a test well **before** your virtual court appearance to be sure you can connect. You may send your cell phone number, email address, and preferred date and time for the test to skypetest@nycourts.gov. We will schedule a test call, send you the invitation by email and conduct the test with you.

Q8. Is SfB secure?

A8. All communications on SfB are encrypted. To learn more about security features: <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/skypeforbusiness/optimizing-your-network/security-guide-for-skype-for-business-online>

Q9. Can you **share documents** with everyone on the call?

A9. You must contact the court about the approved way to share/send documents. If the court allows document sharing with SfB, you can either 1) open the document and share your desktop screen for everyone on the call to view, or 2) share the document by attaching it to the meeting for everyone to download, view and print. Be aware that the document sharing feature might not work on all platforms.

Q10. Where I can find a **tutorial** on using SfB?

A10. Click on the link below:

https://support.office.com/en-us/article/join-a-skype-for-business-meeting-3862be6d-758a-4064-a016-67c0febf3cd5#OS_Type=Windows

Q11. What are the most common problems a user will encounter, and where I can get **technical support** during the SfB call?

A11. Common issues include:

- People cannot hear you:
 - Make sure you are not muted.
 - Select the correct audio device.
- I cannot hear other people:
 - Make sure other people are not muted.
 - Raise your speaker volume.
- My video is off: Make sure the camera is turned on and the correct camera is selected when you have multiple cameras.
- I hear an echo: Lower the volume of your speakers.
- My SfB call becomes non-responsive:
 - Hang up and reconnect the call
 - To prevent this, make sure your software is updated and security patched well ahead of the video call.

- It is also a good idea to reboot your computer at least one hour before the meeting to get a fresh start.
- I am in the middle of the video call, something goes wrong. What should I do?
 - If problems cannot be resolved using the tips above, hang up Skype and reconnect.
 - Email the court by replying to the invitation email for further direction

Q12. Can I use my Skype to join a SfB video call?

A12. No, you must use SfB in a court-organized video call.

Q13. Why can't I use **other products**, such as FaceTime, for videoconferencing with the courts?

SfB, a proven product used by the court system that is secure, able to support multi-party calls, and able to work with different computers and smartphones.

Q13. Whom should I contact to **schedule a SfB video call** with the judge and other parties?

A13. Contact the court clerk. Information could be found by using the court locator at www.nycourts.gov.

Q14. Can I join a SfB video call using an **iPhone or Mac**?

A14. Yes, go to the Apple App Store to download the SfB app (not the regular Skype app).

Q15. If I join the meeting from home, what should I do to achieve the **best audio and visual experience**?

A15. Select a quiet room, preferably no windows behind you. If you do have windows behind you, close the blinds or curtains.

Q16. Why can't I download the SfB **web plug-in**?

A16. This is most likely a security setting on your computer that is set to prevent you from downloading the plug-in. Please see technical support in your organization.

Q17. Can I join the meeting from **multiple devices** at the same time?

A17. No, you should not join the Skype for Business call on two devices, such a smartphone and a laptop. at the same time. This causes confusions for everyone, wastes Internet bandwidth, and causes feedback and an echo.

Q18. Why doesn't my SfB video call work properly over **VPN** (Virtual Private Network)?

A18. VPN establishes a secure tunnel between your computer at home with your company's private network over Internet. It is used to access resources stored in your organization. Since SfB is a cloud

application, it performs best when you are connected directly to Internet without VPN. If you must use VPN for other businesses, make sure you disconnect VPN before joining a SfB call.

Q19. What can I do if I **don't have a broadband** connection or if I have a poor broadband connection?

A19. Here are some options:

1. Travel to a location where you have a reliable broadband connection.
2. Contact the court to use equipment designated for virtual court appearances, if available.
3. Ask the court for permission to use your mobile or landline phone to join the SfB call. If allowed by the court, you should receive a Skype meeting invitation via email with dail-in number phone number.