

RULE 1:8. Jury

1:8-1. Trial by Jury

(a) Criminal Actions. Criminal actions required to be tried by a jury shall be so tried unless the defendant, in writing and with the approval of the court, after notice to the prosecuting attorney and an opportunity to be heard, waives a jury trial.

(b) Civil Actions. Issues in civil actions triable of right by a jury shall be so tried only if a jury trial is demanded by a party in accordance with R. 4:35-1 or R. 6:5-3, as applicable, and is not thereafter waived. If a jury of twelve is requested, that request shall be included in the jury demand.

Note: Source — *R.R.* 3:7-1(a), 4:40-3; paragraph (a) amended September 28, 1982 to be effective immediately; paragraph (a) amended July 13, 1994 to be effective September 1, 1994; captions added to paragraphs (a) and (b) and paragraph (b) amended July 10, 1998 to be effective September 1, 1998; paragraph (a) amended July 27, 2018 to be effective September 1, 2018.

1:8-2. Number of Jurors

(a) Number Deliberating in Criminal Actions. A deliberating jury in a criminal action shall consist of 12 persons, but at any time before verdict the parties may stipulate that the jury shall consist of any number less than 12. Such stipulations shall be in writing and with the approval of the court.

(b) Number Deliberating in Civil Actions. A deliberating jury in a civil action shall consist of six persons unless:

(1) for good cause shown the court orders a jury of 12 persons pursuant to a demand made in accordance with R. 1:8-1(b); or

(2) fewer than six jurors remain prior to commencement of deliberations and the parties then agree on the record to submit the case to the remaining jurors; or

(3) more than six jurors remain prior to the commencement of deliberations and the parties then agree on the record that all remaining jurors shall deliberate.

(c) Verdict in Civil Actions.

(1) Unless the parties have agreed on the record prior to commencement of deliberations to accept a verdict or finding by a lesser number, the verdict or finding shall be by agreement of five jurors when six jurors deliberate, and by 10 jurors when 12 jurors deliberate.

(2) If the parties have agreed on the record to submit the case to fewer than six jurors, pursuant to paragraph (b)(2) of this rule, the verdict or finding shall be

unanimous, unless the parties have also agreed on the record prior to commencement of deliberations to a verdict or finding by a lesser number.

(3) If the parties have agreed on the record to more than six jurors pursuant to paragraph (b)(3) of this rule, the verdict or finding shall be by agreement of five-sixths of the deliberating jurors, unless the parties have otherwise agreed on the record prior to commencement of deliberations.

(d) Alternate Jurors; Civil and Criminal Actions.

(1) All Actions. The court in its discretion may direct the impanelling of a jury of such number as it deems necessary to ensure that a sufficient number of jurors will remain to deliberate. If a juror is excused after being sworn but before opening statements begin, another juror may be impanelled and sworn, but no juror may be empaneled and sworn thereafter. All the jurors shall sit and hear the case, but the court for good cause shown may excuse any of them from service provided the number of jurors is not reduced to less than 12 or 6 as the case may be or such other number as may be stipulated to. If more than such number are left on the jury at the conclusion of the court's charge, the clerk of the court in the jury's presence shall randomly draw such number of names as will reduce the jury to the number required to determine the issues. Following the drawing of the names of jurors to determine the issues, the court may in its discretion order that the alternate jurors not be discharged, in which event the alternate jurors shall be sequestered apart from the other jurors and shall be subject to the same orders and instructions of the court, with respect to sequestration and other matters, as the other jurors. If the alternate jurors are not discharged and if at any time after submission of the case to the jury, a juror dies or is discharged by the court because of illness or other inability to continue, the court may direct the clerk to draw the name of an alternate juror to take the place of the juror who is deceased or discharged. When such a substitution of an alternate juror is made, the court shall instruct the jury to recommence deliberations and shall give the jury such other supplemental instructions as may be appropriate.

(2) Civil Actions. In civil actions, instead of selecting alternate jurors, the parties may agree on the record, pursuant to paragraph (b)(3) of this rule, that all remaining jurors shall deliberate and that the verdict or finding shall be returned by such number as is provided by paragraph (c)(3) of this rule.

Note: Source — R.R. 3:7-1(b), 3:7-2(d), 4:48-2, 4:49-1(a)(b). Amended July 7, 1971 to be effective September 13, 1971; paragraph (d) amended July 14, 1972 to be effective September 5, 1972; paragraph (d) amended June 29, 1973 to be effective September 10, 1973; paragraph (b) amended July 17, 1975 to be effective September 8, 1975; paragraph (d) amended July 29, 1977 to be effective September 6, 1977; paragraph (d) amended July 21, 1980 to be effective September 8, 1980; paragraph (a) amended September 28, 1982 to be effective immediately; paragraph (d) amended July 13, 1994 to be effective September 1, 1994; amended July 10, 1998 to be effective September 1, 1998; paragraph (a) amended July 27, 2018 to be effective September 1, 2018.

1:8-3. Examination of Jurors; Challenges

(a) Examination of Jurors. For the purpose of determining whether a challenge should be interposed, the court shall interrogate the prospective jurors in the box after the required number are drawn without placing them under oath. The parties or their attorneys may supplement the court's interrogation in its discretion.

(b) Challenges in the Array; Challenges for Cause. Any party may challenge the array in writing on the ground that the jurors were not selected, drawn or summoned according to law. A challenge to the array shall be decided before any individual juror is examined. A challenge to any individual juror which by law is ground of challenge for cause must be made before the juror is sworn to try the case, but the court for good cause may permit it to be made after the juror is sworn but before any evidence is presented. All challenges shall be tried by the court.

(c) Peremptory Challenges in Civil Actions. In civil actions each party shall be entitled to 6 peremptory challenges. Parties represented by the same attorney shall be deemed 1 party for the purposes of this rule. Where, however, multiple parties having a substantial identity of interest in one or more issues are represented by different attorneys, the trial court in its discretion may, on application of counsel prior to the selection of the jury, accord the adverse party such additional number of peremptory challenges as it deems appropriate in order to avoid unfairness to the adverse party.

(d) Peremptory Challenges in Criminal Actions. Upon indictment for kidnapping, murder, aggravated manslaughter, manslaughter, aggravated assault, aggravated sexual assault, sexual assault, aggravated criminal sexual contact, aggravated arson, arson, burglary, robbery, forgery if it constitutes a crime of the third degree as defined by N.J.S.A. 2C:21-1b, or perjury, the defendant shall be entitled to 20 peremptory challenges if tried alone and to 10 such challenges when tried jointly; and the State shall have 12 peremptory challenges if the defendant is tried alone and 6 peremptory challenges for each 10 afforded defendants when tried jointly. In other criminal actions each defendant shall be entitled to 10 peremptory challenges and the State shall have 10 peremptory challenges for each 10 challenges afforded defendants. When the case is to be tried by a foreign jury, each defendant shall be entitled to 5 peremptory challenges, and the State 5 peremptory challenges for each 5 peremptory challenges afforded defendants.

(e) Order of Exercising of Peremptory Challenges.

(1) In any case in which each side is entitled to an equal number of challenges, those challenges shall alternate one by one, with the State in a criminal case and the plaintiff in a civil case exercising the first challenge.

(2) In any case in which there is more than one defendant and/or an uneven number of peremptory challenges, the court shall establish the order of

challenge, which shall be set forth on the record prior to the commencement of the jury selection process.

(3) The passing of a peremptory challenge by any party shall not constitute a waiver of the right thereafter to exercise the same against any juror, unless all parties pass successive challenges.

(f) Conference Before Examination. Prior to the examination of the prospective jurors, the court shall hold a conference on the record to determine the areas of inquiry during voir dire. Attorneys shall submit proposed voir dire questions in writing in advance. If requested, the court shall determine whether the attorneys may participate in the questioning of the prospective jurors and, if so, to what extent. During the course of the questioning, additional questions of prospective jurors may be requested and asked as appropriate under the circumstances. The judge shall rule on the record on the proposed voir dire questions and on any requested attorney participation.

(g) Jury Selection Must be Conducted in Open Court. Subject to (1) and (2) below, the public must be provided reasonable access to the courtroom during the jury selection portion of the trial.

(1) Exclusion of Public from Courtroom; Compelling Reasons; Alternatives. The trial judge may not exclude the public from the courtroom unless there is a compelling need to do so. In making that determination, the trial judge shall first consider reasonable alternatives, such as holding jury selection in a larger courtroom, if one is available. If there are compelling reasons to exclude the public from the courtroom, the judge shall consider alternative ways to permit observation, including electronic means. The trial judge shall issue a statement of reasons for limiting or denying public access to jury selection.

(2) Voir Dire of Individual Jurors. The requirement of public access to the courtroom during jury selection does not preclude the court from conducting the voir dire of any individual juror on the record at sidebar, or in writing.

Note: Source — R.R. 3:7-2(b)(c), 4:48-1, 4:48-3. Paragraphs (c) and (d) amended July 7, 1971 to be effective September 13, 1971; paragraph (d) amended July 21, 1980 to be effective September 8, 1980; paragraph (a) amended September 28, 1982 to be effective immediately; paragraph (d) amended July 22, 1983 to be effective September 12, 1983; paragraph (d) amended July 26, 1984 to be effective September 10, 1984; paragraph (d) amended November 5, 1986 to be effective January 1, 1987; paragraph (c) amended November 7, 1988 to be effective January 2, 1989; paragraph (e) added July 14, 1992 to be effective September 1, 1992; paragraph (b) amended July 13, 1994 to be effective September 1, 1994; paragraph (f) added July 5, 2000 to be effective September 5, 2000; paragraph (f) amended July 27, 2006 to be effective September 1, 2006; paragraph (g) added July 9, 2013 to be effective September 1, 2013; paragraphs (a) and (d) amended July 27, 2018 to be effective September 1, 2018.

1:8-4. Foreperson

Juror number one shall be the foreperson; but if that juror is thereafter selected as an alternate juror or otherwise discharged, then the juror next drawn on the impanelling of a jury, who remains on the jury for the determination of the issues, shall be the foreperson.

Note: Source-R.R. 3:7-2(e), 4:48-2 (last phrase). Amended July 7, 1971 to be effective September 13, 1971, former rule deleted and new rule adopted June 29, 1973 to be effective September 10, 1973; caption and text amended June 29, 1990 to be effective September 4, 1990.

1:8-5. Availability of Petit Jury List

The list of the general panel of petit jurors shall be made available by the clerk of the court to any party requesting the same at least 10 days prior to the date fixed for trial.

Note: Source — *R.R.* 3:7-2(a). Amended July 16, 1979 to be effective September 10, 1979; amended September 28, 1982 to be effective immediately; amended July 27, 2018 to be effective September 1, 2018.

1:8-6. Sequestration of Juries

(a) Prior to Instructing of Jury. The jury shall not be sequestered in any action, civil or criminal, prior to the instructing of the jury by the court, unless the court, in its discretion so orders on its finding that there are extraordinary circumstances requiring sequestration for the protection of the jurors or in the interests of justice.

(b) Following Instructing of Jury. Following the instructing of the jury by the court and during the course of deliberations, the court may, in its discretion, in both civil and criminal actions, permit the dispersal of the jury for the night, for meals, and during other authorized intermissions in the deliberations.

Note: Source-R.R. 3:7-2(f). Amended July 14, 1972 to be effective September 5, 1972.

1:8-7. Requests to Charge the Jury

(a) In Civil Cases. Either within the time provided by R. 4:25-7 or thereafter but before the close of the evidence, as to issues not anticipated prior to trial, any party may submit written requests that the court instruct the jury on the law as set forth in the requests. The requests shall make specific reference to the Model Civil Jury Charges, if applicable, or to applicable law. Copies of the requests shall be provided to all parties at the time they are submitted to the court. The court shall, on the record, rule on the requests prior to closing arguments to the jury. A verbatim record shall be made of any

charge conference the court holds. Objections to the instructions to the jury shall be in accordance with R. 1:7-2.

(b) In Criminal Cases. Prior to closing arguments, the court shall hold a charge conference on the record in all criminal cases. The parties shall, if directed by the court, make requests to charge in a format suitable for ready preparation and submission to the jury at a time directed by the court. Copies of the requests shall be provided to all parties at the time they are submitted to the court. Whenever practicable, the court in advance of the charge conference shall provide counsel with a copy of its proposed jury charge for review, which copy shall be marked as a court exhibit. At the conference the court shall advise counsel of the offenses, defenses and other legal issues to be charged and shall rule on requests made by counsel. Objections to the instructions to the jury shall be in accordance with R. 1:7-2. Any party, at or before commencement of trial, may submit written requests that the court instruct the jury on the law as set forth in the requests. As to issues not anticipated prior to trial, any party may submit written requests before closing arguments.

Note: R.R. 3:7-7(a), 4:52-1 (first and second sentences); amended July 21, 1980 to be effective September 8, 1980; paragraph (a) caption and new paragraph (b) added July 13, 1994 to be effective September 1, 1994; paragraph (a) amended July 10, 1998 to be effective September 1, 1998; paragraph (a) amended July 5, 2000 to be effective September 5, 2000; paragraph (b) amended July 9, 2013 to be effective January 1, 2014; rule caption amended, paragraph (a) caption amended, and paragraphs (a) and (b) amended March 4, 2014 to be effective immediately; paragraph (b) amended May 14, 2014 to be effective immediately.

1:8-8. Materials to be Submitted to the Jury (Exhibits and Lists; Jury Instructions); Note-Taking; Juror Questions

(a) Exhibits and Lists. The jury may take into the jury room the exhibits received in evidence, and if the court so directs in a civil action, a list of the claims made by the parties and of the defenses to such claims, a list of the various items of damage upon which proof was submitted at the trial and a list of the verdicts that may be properly found by the jury. Any such list may be prepared by an attorney or the court, but before delivery to the jury, it shall be submitted to all parties. The court may also, in its discretion and at such time and in such format as it shall determine, permit the submission to the jury of individual copies of any exhibit provided an appropriate request to employ that technique was made prior to trial on notice to all parties and provided further that the court finds that no party will be unduly prejudiced by the procedure.

(b) Copies of Jury Instructions.

(1) Civil Cases. In civil cases, the court in its discretion may submit a copy of its instructions to the jury for its consideration in the jury room. The court may consider the following factors in exercising its discretion to provide a copy of its instructions to the jury in a civil case: (1) the track to which the case is assigned; (2) a request of one or more parties for submission of written instructions to the jury; (3) the

length of the trial; (4) the complexity of the issues and charge; (5) whether the parties timely submitted a proposed charge to the court; (6) whether providing written instructions would unreasonably delay the proceedings; and (7) any other factor based upon the circumstances of the case.

(2) Criminal Cases. In criminal cases, the court shall submit two or more copies of its final instructions to the jury for the jury's use in the jury room during deliberations. The court may, however, dispense with the submission of the jury instructions in writing if it finds that preparation of written instructions will cause undue delay in the trial. Counsel's failure to submit written instructions upon request of the court in accordance with Rule 1:8-7(b) shall be a consideration for a finding of undue delay in the trial.

(c) Juror Note-Taking. Prior to opening statements, the attorneys or any party may request that the jury be permitted to take notes during the trial or portion thereof, including opening and closing statements. If the court determines to permit note-taking after all parties have had an opportunity to be heard, it shall provide the jurors with notetaking materials and shall take such steps as will ensure the security and confidentiality of each juror's notes.

(d) Juror Questions. Prior to the commencement of the *voir dire* of prospective jurors in a civil action, the court shall determine whether to allow jurors to propose questions to be asked of the witnesses. The court shall make its determination after the parties have been given an opportunity to address the issue, but they need not consent. If the court determines to permit jurors to submit proposed questions, it shall explain to the jury in its opening remarks that subject to the rules of evidence and the court's discretion, questions by the jurors will be allowed for the purpose of clarifying the testimony of a witness. The jurors' questions shall be submitted to the court in writing at the conclusion of the testimony of each witness and before the witness is excused. The court, with counsel, shall review the questions out of the presence of the jury. Counsel shall state on the record any objections they may have, and the court shall rule on the permissibility of each question. The witness shall then be recalled, and the court shall ask the witness those questions ruled permissible. Counsel shall, on request, be permitted to reopen direct and cross-examination to respond to the jurors' questions and the witness's answers. A witness who has been excused shall not be recalled to respond to juror questions unless all counsel and the court agree or unless the court otherwise orders for good cause shown.

Note: Source-R.R. 4:52-2; caption and text amended July 15, 1982 to be effective September 13, 1982; amended and paragraphs (a) and (b) designated July 10, 1998 to be effective September 1, 1998; new paragraph (c) added July 12, 2002 to be effective September 3, 2002; caption amended July 28, 2004 to be effective September 1, 2004; paragraph (c) amended July 27, 2006 to be effective September 1, 2006; paragraph (a) amended July 19, 2012 to be effective September 4, 2012; caption amended, paragraph (a) caption and text amended, new paragraph (b) adopted (with subparagraph (b)(1) text relocated from paragraph (a) and subparagraph (b)(2) text new), former paragraphs (b) and (c) redesignated as paragraphs (c) and (d) July 9, 2013 to be effective January 1, 2014.

1:8-9. Return of Verdict

In every trial by jury the verdict shall be returned by the jury to the judge in open court. The verdict shall be unanimous in all criminal actions and shall be rendered in civil actions by the number required by R. 1:8-2(c).

Note: Source-R.R. 3:7-9(a), 4:40-4, 7:8-6; amended July 10, 1998 to be effective September 1, 1998.

1:8-10. Polling of Jury

Before the verdict is recorded, the jury shall be polled at the request of any party or upon the court's motion, and it shall be polled in every civil action if the verdict is not unanimous. If the poll discloses that there is not unanimous concurrence in a criminal action or concurrence by the number required by R. 1:8-2(c) in a civil action, the jury may be directed to retire for further deliberations or discharged.

Note: Source-R.R. 3:7B9(d), 4:49B2; amended July 10, 1998 to be effective September 1, 1998.