

DIRECT ACCESS GUIDE

How to Prepare Your Hearing Bundle

A clear, step by step guide to getting your documents court ready before your hearing date, written for people instructing a barrister directly.

8 simple steps

Plain English

Checklist included

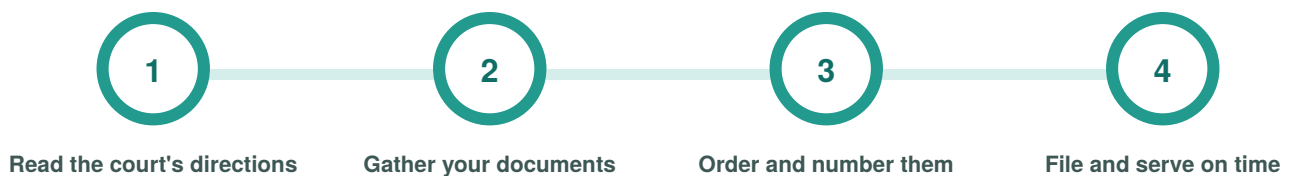
What is a **hearing bundle**, and why does it matter?

A hearing bundle is a single, organised set of the documents the court and everyone in the case will use at your hearing. A clear, well ordered bundle helps the judge follow your case quickly, and it shows you have prepared properly. A messy or late bundle can cause delay, frustration, and in some cases the hearing being put off.

In plain terms

Think of the bundle as the agreed folder of papers for your case. Every document is placed in a logical order, every page is numbered, and a contents page at the front tells everyone exactly where to find each item. When the judge says "please turn to page 24", everyone is looking at the same thing.

THE JOURNEY TO YOUR HEARING



WHO PREPARES THE BUNDLE?



Usually the applicant

In most cases the person who started the proceedings prepares the bundle, unless the court orders otherwise. Always check your order.



With your barrister's help

If you have instructed a barrister directly, they can advise on what to include and check the bundle before it goes to court.



Start early

A bundle almost always takes longer than expected. Begin as soon as you have your hearing date so there is time to fix any gaps and send it to your barrister with room to spare.

Building your bundle, one step at a time

1



Read the court's order and directions first

Your directions order is the rulebook for your bundle. It tells you who must prepare it, the deadline for filing and serving it, any page limit, and the format the court expects. Different courts have different rules, so never assume. Family cases follow Practice Direction 27A, and civil cases follow the relevant court guide. When in doubt, ask your barrister.

Your deadline and page limit are set out in your court order

2



Gather all of your relevant documents

Collect everything connected to your case in one place. This usually includes the application and any response, all court orders, witness statements, correspondence between the parties, and any evidence or expert reports. Only include documents that are genuinely relevant. A focused bundle is far more useful to the judge than a thick one.

Quality over quantity

3



Put the documents in a logical order

Most bundles follow a sensible structure: the index first, then any case summary or chronology, then applications and court orders, then witness statements, and finally the supporting documents and correspondence. Within each section, arrange documents in date order. A predictable order helps everyone find things quickly during the hearing.

Group by type, then by date

4



Create a clear index or contents page

The index sits at the very front of the bundle and lists every document with the page number where it starts. This is the map for your bundle. A good index means the judge, the other side, and any witness can turn straight to the right page without hunting through the papers.

List every document and its page number



A steady tip

Build the index last, once your order of documents is settled. That way the page numbers you record will match the finished bundle exactly.

Finishing, checking, and getting it to court

5



Number every single page

Paginate the bundle from start to finish, with a number on every page, usually in the bottom right corner. Continuous numbering is what allows people to say "page 24" and land in the same place. Do this after the order is final, so nothing shifts once the numbers are in.

One continuous sequence, bottom right

6



Stay within the page limit

Many courts set a limit on bundle length. In family proceedings the default limit is 350 pages unless the court gives permission to go further. If your bundle is too long, revisit what is truly relevant rather than including everything. If you genuinely need more pages, you must ask the court in advance.

Ask permission before exceeding the limit

7



Prepare it in the required format

Courts increasingly expect a digital bundle: a single PDF that is bookmarked so people can jump between sections, and text searchable so words can be found quickly. Check whether paper copies are also needed. Getting the format right avoids a last minute scramble the night before your hearing.

One PDF, bookmarked and searchable

8



File it with the court and serve it on time

Send the finished bundle to the court and to the other party by the deadline in your order. Deadlines are strict, and late bundles can cause real problems. Keep a copy for yourself and any witness, send it to your barrister in good time, and make sure everyone is working from the same final version.

On time to the court and the other side



Give your barrister time

Your direct access barrister works best with the bundle in hand well before the hearing. Sending it early gives them time to prepare properly and to raise anything that needs fixing.

Your hearing bundle checklist

Work through each item and tick it off as you go. When every box is ticked, your bundle should be court ready.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- ☐ I have read the court order and know who must prepare the bundle
- ☐ I know the deadline for filing and serving the bundle
- ☐ I know the page limit and the format required, whether paper, digital, or both

BUILDING THE BUNDLE

- ☐ I have gathered all of the relevant documents in one place
- ☐ I have removed anything irrelevant or duplicated
- ☐ The documents are grouped by type and placed in date order
- ☐ Every page is numbered in one continuous sequence
- ☐ There is an index at the front listing each document and its page number
- ☐ The bundle is within the page limit, or I have permission to exceed it

FORMAT AND DELIVERY

- ☐ Any digital bundle is a single PDF, bookmarked and text searchable
- ☐ I have filed the bundle with the court by the deadline
- ☐ I have served a copy on the other party
- ☐ I have kept a copy for myself and for any witness
- ☐ I have sent the final bundle to my barrister in good time

Not sure your bundle is right?

A direct access barrister can review your bundle, tell you what to include, and make sure you walk into your hearing fully prepared. Barrister Connect, part of The Barrister Group, helps you instruct a specialist barrister directly, without needing a solicitor first.

[Instruct a barrister](#)

barristerconnect.com