

Working copies

Author

Northwest Justice Project

Last Review Date

July 30, 2024

When you “file” documents with a court, you give the court documents for processing. Often you must also give a court “working copies” of the same documents. The judge or commissioner will use these extra copies to prepare for your case. That way the court doesn't need to make copies itself.

What are working copies?

Working copies are an **extra copy of your court papers** the judge uses to get ready for your case. The judge doesn't always have access to the entire court file when getting ready for your hearing. If you don't get working copies to the judge, the judge might not otherwise see your recent court filings.

When you file documents with a court, it means you're giving the court documents to make part of the written record (the court file) of the case you're involved in. Often you must also give a court “working copies” of the documents you are filing.

When you give the judge working copies, then the court clerk doesn't need to make copies for the judge.

Are there other names for working copies?

Yes. You may also hear them called **working papers**, courtesy copies, judge's copies, or bench copies. ("The bench" means "judge.")

Can I submit working copies by email?

Maybe. In some courts, you can file documents by email (called "electronically" or "e-filing"). You can also give a judge working copies electronically.

If you don't have a lawyer, it's usually cheaper and easier to file documents and submit working copies in paper form, not electronically.

I can't submit them electronically. How can I get my working copies to the judge?

You can ask the court clerk where you're filing your papers where to deliver your working copies. The court clerk handles clerical matters like keeping records, entering judgments into the court record, and providing certified copies. Each Superior Court and District Court has a clerk's office. Someone from clerk's office staff is usually in the courtroom during hearings.

Are there any rules about when and how to deliver working copies?

Yes, depending on which court you're in. Each Washington county has its own rules (called local court rules). You should call or email the court clerk, or the family law facilitator if your case is a family law case and your county has a facilitator, to ask about working copies.

You must follow all the rules for working copies.

Your court may have rules about:

- Where to deliver working copies
- Any deadline you must meet for delivering working copies
- How many copies to make
- How to label working copies

Where can I learn more about court procedures?

You can visit our [Going to Court](#) topic, or the [Administrative Office of the Court's website \(http://www.courts.wa.gov/\)](#).

[WashingtonLawHelp.org](#) gives general information. It is not legal advice. Find organizations that provide free legal help on our [Get legal help](#) page.