



JUDICIAL TRAINING & EDUCATION UPDATE

Dedicated to the training & education of the Minnesota trial bench and attorneys



JUDGES' ON-LINE JURY TRIAL BENCH BOOK

A trial judge (and trial attorneys) best friend

Access via the [Judicial Training Blog](#) – click on Tab [Judges Jury Trial Bench Book](#)

PROFESSOR SIMON: U of M Law Professor Steve Simon is one of the Minnesota judiciary's most iconic figures. Virtually every district court judge has at some point in their judicial career graduated from Professor Simon's Judicial Trial Skills Program. Although he retired from the law school in 2012, he continues to mentor all newly appointed judges at his acclaimed Judicial Trial Skills Program. Following a long history of legal and academic achievements, one of his greatest accomplishments has been the development of a first of its kind on-line Bench Book titled, "Trial Procedures and Practices for Judges."

3 IMPORTANTS FACTS ABOUT THE BENCH BOOK YOU SHOULD KNOW:

1. While many of the trial procedures and practices that judges rely on to assist them in effectively managing trials are set out in rule, statute, or case decisions, many are not. The practices and procedures described in this online bench book were developed and adopted over many years by judges to aid them in the management of trials, reduce reversible error, and increase the fairness of a trial.
2. Often these practices and procedures are not written down anywhere, they are passed on from a senior experienced judge to a new judge informally by word of mouth. There are few if any works that gather in one place all of the trial procedures, practices, and other techniques judges use to effectively regulate the trial process. This "Online Jury Trial Bench Book" incorporates many of these trial management practices and procedures into one easy to access and user friendly on-line format.
3. The Bench Book is designed to allow judges (and attorneys) to get quick answers to issues that arise immediately prior to or during trial. The format of each section is to state the basic rule or procedure and then give a short discussion of the rule, procedure, or practice. A judge can have the electronic bench book opened on his or her laptop on the bench (or other mobile device) and, using the powerful built-in search function, jump directly to the section that discusses that topic or issue. While its use is primarily for jury trials many of the procedures and practices set out in the Bench Book apply equally to court trials.
4. In addition to Trial Procedures and Practices, the Bench Book has expanded over the years to include sections on Managing Civil Trials, Misdemeanor Criminal Procedures and Traffic Laws, and also includes a section on Chemical Dependency and Treatment.

The Bench Book is designed to be edited online. Judges are invited and encouraged to send Prof. Simon or Judge Pendleton suggestions for additional topics, procedures, and practices that they have developed that address the suggested topic. The Bench Book will be expanded to include the collective wisdom and experience of members of the bench. Professor Simon can be reached at: simon001@umn.edu. Judge Pendleton can be reached at: alan.pendleton@courts.state.mn.us.