

**631.5 Appearance — default.**

[This section](#) applies to all small claims except actions for forcible entry and detainer pursuant to [chapter 648](#) and actions for abandonment of mobile homes or personal property pursuant to [chapter 555B](#).

1. *Appearance.* A defendant may appear in person or by attorney, and by the denial of a claim a defendant does not waive any defenses.

2. *Hearing set.* If all defendants either have entered a timely appearance or have defaulted, the clerk shall assign a contested claim to the small claims calendar for hearing at a place and time certain. The time of hearing shall be not less than five days nor more than twenty days after the latest timely appearance, unless otherwise ordered by the court. The clerk shall transmit the original notice and all other papers relating to the case to the judicial officer to whom the case is assigned, and copies of all papers so transmitted shall be retained in the clerk's office.

3. *Partial service.* If the plaintiff has joined more than one defendant, and less than all defendants are served with notice as determined by [subsection 4](#), the plaintiff may elect to proceed against all defendants served or may elect to have a continuance, issuable by the clerk, to a date certain not more than sixty days thereafter. If the plaintiff elects to proceed, the action shall be dismissed without prejudice as against each defendant not served with notice.

4. *Return of service.* Proper notice shall be established by a signed return receipt or a return of service as provided in [rule of civil procedure 1.308](#).

5. *Notification to parties.* When a small claim is set for hearing the clerk immediately shall notify by ordinary mail each party or the attorney representing the party, and the judicial officer to whom the action is assigned, of the date, time and place of hearing.

6. *Default.* If a defendant fails to appear and the clerk in accordance with [subsection 4](#) determines that proper notice has been given, judgment shall be rendered against the defendant by the clerk if the relief is readily ascertainable. If the relief is not readily ascertainable the claim shall be assigned to a judicial magistrate for determination.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §631.5]

[84 Acts, ch 1322, §3, 4; 93 Acts, ch 154, §21; 2003 Acts, ch 151, §49; 2004 Acts, ch 1101, §86](#)

Referred to in [§631.9](#)