



What is Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)?

ODR is a process that utilizes technology to facilitate the resolution of disputes between parties, primarily through **online conciliation and arbitration**. It offers an alternative to traditional, often time-consuming, and expensive court-based litigation.

Why is SMART ODR Important for you, the Investor?

SEBI's SMART ODR portal is a significant step towards enhancing investor protection and promoting ease of doing business in the securities market. Here's why it matters:

- **Speed & Efficiency:** ODR aims to resolve disputes much faster than traditional methods, often within stringent timelines. This means quicker redressal for your grievances.
- **Convenience & Accessibility:** You can initiate and participate in the dispute resolution process from anywhere, anytime, with an internet connection. This eliminates the need for physical travel and appearances.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** By reducing the need for physical meetings, travel, and extensive legal procedures, ODR can significantly lower the costs associated with dispute resolution.
- **Neutrality & Fairness:** Disputes are handled by independent and neutral ODR institutions and professionals (conciliators/arbitrators) empaneled by Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs) like Stock Exchanges and Depositories.
- **Confidentiality:** ODR platforms often provide secure and confidential environments for proceedings, protecting your sensitive information.
- **Streamlined Process:** The entire process, from filing a complaint to receiving a resolution, is designed to be paperless and user-friendly.

When and How Can You Use SMART ODR?

Before approaching SMART ODR, remember the escalation hierarchy:

1. **Directly with the Market Participant:** First, lodge your complaint directly with the concerned listed company, specified intermediary (e.g., stockbroker, mutual fund), or regulated entity.
2. **SCORES Portal:** If your grievance is not satisfactorily redressed by the Market Participant, you can escalate it through SEBI's existing **SCORES (SEBI Complaint Redressal System) Portal**.
3. **SMART ODR Portal:** Only after exhausting the above options and if you are still not satisfied with the outcome, can you initiate dispute resolution through the **SMART ODR Portal**.



The Process (Simplified):

- **Access the Portal:** Visit the official SMART ODR portal (<https://smartodr.in/>).
- **Register/Login:** Create an account or log in using your credentials.
- **File Your Dispute:** Provide details of your grievance, upload relevant documents, and select your preferred mode of resolution (conciliation or arbitration, as applicable).
- **Allocation of ODR Institution:** The ODR portal will automatically allocate an impaneled ODR institution to administer your dispute.
- **Resolution Process:** The ODR institution will facilitate conciliation or arbitration, with the aim of reaching a mutually agreeable settlement or a binding arbitral award.

Key Features of a Robust ODR Platform (like SMART ODR)

- **Electronic Communication:** All communications, document exchange, and proceedings are conducted online.
- **Algorithmic Tools (where applicable):** Some platforms may utilize smart tools to assist in finding a resolution.
- **Human Oversight:** Despite technological advancements, human oversight is crucial to ensure fairness and prevent bias.
- **Data Security & Privacy:** Robust encryption and security measures to protect your sensitive data.
- **Transparency:** Clear disclosure of processes, rules, and the role of technology.
- **User-Centric Design:** Easy-to-navigate interface for a smooth user experience.

Your Role as an Investor: Do's and Don'ts

DO's:

- **Understand the process:** Familiarize yourself with the SEBI ODR guidelines and the portal's functionality.
- **Keep Records:** Maintain detailed records of all your transactions and communications with market participants.
- **Provide Complete Information:** When filing a complaint, provide all necessary and accurate details to expedite the process.
- **Be Responsive:** Actively participate in the ODR process and respond to communications in a timely manner.
- **Seek Clarification:** If you have any doubts, reach out to the ODR institution for clarification.

DON'Ts:

- **Skip Initial Steps:** Do not directly approach SMART ODR without first lodging your complaint with the market participant and then on SCORES.
- **Withhold Information:** Do not intentionally hide or misrepresent facts.
- **Engage in Parallel Proceedings:** Do not initiate the same dispute in other forums (e.g., court, consumer forum) while it is ongoing on the ODR portal.
- **Expect Immediate Resolution:** While ODR is fast, it still requires a process. Be patient and cooperative.