

A GUIDE TO COURT

You have a right to represent yourself, but you also have the responsibility to follow proper procedures. When you come to court, you must be dressed appropriately and behave with civility. These guidelines can help you understand some basic rules and procedures for your day in court.

1. When you enter the building you must go through security. It's against the law to bring weapons to court. You also may not bring food, drinks, gum, or tobacco products past security.
2. Always arrive in court a few minutes early. Bring all of your relevant documents with you. Do not bring children with you unless absolutely necessary.
3. If you are ill or have some other unavoidable difficulty getting to court on time, call the judge's office prior to your court time and explain your situation. Failure to call before your court time may result in your case being heard or dismissed without you. Calling the judge's office does not excuse your absence. The judge will make this decision.
4. Wear long pants or a dress, shoes, and an appropriate shirt without slogans or advertisements. Do not wear shower shoes, shorts, or gang symbols. Do not wear "political cause" buttons or vulgar words on your clothing. Do not wear sunglasses or hats inside the building.
5. Be courteous to everyone in the courthouse. Showing anger or hostility will not help your case. Do not curse, use vulgar gestures, or call people insulting names.
6. In the hallways and restrooms, do not threaten, confront, or argue with people. When finished, leave peacefully.
7. If you have hearing problems or other serious medical problems, notify court employees before the trial begins.
8. Notify the court 15 days in advance if you need a sign language or foreign language interpreter.
9. Make sure you turn your cell phone off. If it is left on, the bailiff may take it away from you for the day. Recording or taking pictures in court is not allowed.
10. Once your case is called, come forward and stand in front of a microphone. Ask the judge's permission before you approach the bench or the witness stand.
11. Stand when speaking in court, and speak loudly and into the microphone. Speak only to the judge or to witnesses when questioning them. Do not make comments to the other side or anyone else in the courtroom.
12. Do not interrupt or argue with others. You will have your turn to present your case, to cross-examine your opponent's witnesses, and to ask questions of your own witnesses.
13. Do not interfere with a witness by making gestures, noises, or by shaking or nodding your head during their testimony. Do not "coach" your witnesses or tell them what to say.
14. When you testify, answer all questions truthfully and only answer the questions asked. Do not ramble or offer offensive comments about anyone.
15. The judge is not allowed to talk with you about your case outside of court unless all parties are present. Do not try to talk with the judge or have anyone else do so.
16. Do not leave the courtroom until your case is over and the judge excuses you.