

TIPS FOR YOUR DAY IN COURT

1. Don't Miss Your Court Date. Court is not an appointment that can be missed or rescheduled. If you don't show up, you will likely lose the case by default. If you have a serious reason why you cannot go to court on the assigned day, call the Judge's clerk at the Clerk of Court's office. Usually you need to file papers requesting a change, or get the other side to agree to change the date.
2. If you are the Respondent in a case (someone else started the case) and you agree with the other side's requests or don't have any defense, you may think there is no point in going to court. Not going can be dangerous because you might not fully understand everything that can or will be ordered in your absence.
3. Allow Plenty of Time to Get to Court. You should arrive at the courtroom 30 minutes before your hearing time. Consider the traffic, weather, parking or frequency of the bus and allow plenty of extra time. You are not allowed to carry any weapons in the courthouse.
4. Bring your files. You should have a file with copies of all papers you and the other side have filed with the court, or given to each other.
5. Dress nicely and take your hat off.
6. Do not bring children. Unless the court has told you to bring your children to the hearing, make arrangements for someone to take care of your children if possible.
7. Proper conduct in the courtroom. Certain behaviors are not allowed because they are noisy, distracting or disrespectful. You cannot: chew gum, eat, read a newspaper, sleep, wear a hat, listen to earphones, carry a cell phone or pager unless it's turned off, have a camera or camera phone, or carry a weapon.
8. During the hearing you should listen carefully, ask permission of the Judge to speak, talk directly to the Judge and not the other side, avoid arguing with or interrupting another person, and control your emotions. When you talk to the Judge, start by saying "Your Honor". Speak loudly and clearly and remember that only one person can speak at a time.
9. Before you leave court make sure you understand what happens next. Do you need to come back for another court hearing? Do you need to take other steps or actions? Will the Judge make an order as a result of the hearing? Politely ask questions if you do not understand what will happen next.