

Civil Case Tip Sheets

How to Act in Court

This resource is part of the [Civil Case Tip Sheets](#) series. It was developed to help self representing litigants prepare for trial. The Tip Sheets provide general information. They do not provide legal advice. Only a lawyer can provide legal advice. Be respectful and serious in court—make a good impression.

What to Wear

Dress neatly in clean clothes. Ask your witnesses and supporters to do the same.

What to do When You Go to Court

- Be on time—arrive early if you can.
- Go into the courtroom and stay there until the clerk calls your name and case.
- Stand when you speak and when the judge speaks to you.
- Speak calmly and clearly—use your best language, not slang.
- When you use a document or exhibit, give it to the court clerk who will then give it to the judge or witness.

What to Avoid in Court

- Don't make faces or gestures—they may give the judge a bad impression. Tell your witnesses and supporters not to do this either.
- Don't use slang—unless you are quoting exactly what someone said.
- Don't argue with the judge—once the judge makes a decision, do not argue about it.
- Don't interrupt others.
- Don't talk directly to the other side or their witnesses. Instead, speak to the judge. For example, if you want to know the name of a witness, say, "Your Honour, can Ms. Lee please tell me the name of this witness?"

What to Call People in Court

Never use just a first name. Instead, use the following names for people in court:

- The Judge
 - In Provincial Court: Your Honour
 - In Supreme Court: My Lord or My Lady
 - In Appeal Court: My Lord or My Lady
- Sheriff or Deputy Sheriff: Mr. or Madam Sheriff or Deputy Sheriff
- Court Clerk: Mr. or Madam Clerk
- All Others: Use their last name, for example, Mr. Perry

What to Do if You Don't Understand Something

Tell the judge that you don't understand. The judge will try to help you.