

Going to court is a formal occasion. The members of the bench (judges) and bar (attorneys) take their role very seriously, and many chose this profession after careful reflection and many years of study. In court, there are rules about behavior, established rules of procedure and even what you can say is carefully controlled. The rules only apply in the courtroom, but how you manage them may significantly affect your case.

How you present yourself and first impressions are very important. Instead of wearing whatever you feel like (your work clothes, casual clothes, ect.) to court, ask yourself who will the judge pay more attention to? Men should wear a suit and tie or sport coat and tie. Women should wear a business suit or nice dress. If you don't have these kinds of clothes or don't have time to change, at least be sure your clothes are clean. Men should remember to shave. Get a haircut if you need one. Think of going to court like you would going for a job interview. Try to look your best. Comb your hair and be sure your hands and fingernails are clean. Watch what you say to the judge. Rude behavior is not tolerated and you can lose your case on that kind of mistake alone. Instead, be respectful and don't argue. Don't get excited and don't interrupt. Be polite.

Patience is very important. You may have to be there all morning and then return in the afternoon. You are free to leave the courtroom when you need to, but remember to tell an officer of the court that you are leaving. Officers of the court include your attorney, or public defender, the bailiff or the court clerk. If your case is called and you haven't told someone you were leaving, the judge can issue a warrant for your immediate arrest.

Cell phones, laptop computers, handheld stereos, CD players and other similar items can not be used in court. Just sit, wait patiently, and pay attention to how other people interact with the judge. Do not read a newspaper or book while in court. This is disrespectful. Finally, and most importantly, make sure to get enough rest the night before a court date. While it is a quiet place, you should make sure never to fall asleep in court. If you do, it is likely you will be escorted out by the Marshall's office and forced to come back to court on another date, thereby losing another day from work.