

## GUIDELINES FOR COURTROOM CONDUCT – CIVIL DIVISION

1. Be on time for your trial.
2. Dress neatly.
3. No food or drinks are allowed in the courtroom.
4. It is not advisable to bring your children.
5. Report to Room 603 for directions to the courtroom.
6. Review your paperwork before the trial. You may use written notes during the trial to refresh your memory. You may not read your notes aloud to the judge. Stick to the facts. Do not ramble when offering evidence to support your side of the story.
7. When the judge calls your case, stand up to let the judge know you are in the courtroom. The judge will tell you to come forward.
8. The judge may ask the parties to make opening statements. This should be a brief statement that tells the judge what the Plaintiff's complaint is seeking and what the Defendant's defense is.
9. After opening statements, the Plaintiff can call their witnesses. After each witness has testified, the Defendant may ask questions of each witness (cross-examination). The Plaintiff may then ask the witnesses follow-up questions. After the Plaintiff has called all their witnesses the Defendant can call their witnesses and the Plaintiff may ask questions (cross-examination) followed by follow up questions by the Defendant. The Plaintiff and Defendant can call themselves or each other as a witness.
10. When the judge asks you questions, be direct with your answers. If you don't know an answer, admit that you do not know the answer. Do not be afraid to admit that you do not know something.
11. Testimony or evidence based on reports or statements of others rather than the personal knowledge of a witness is called hearsay. The judge will generally not allow hearsay to be admissible as testimony or evidence.
12. When introducing an exhibit you must first show it to the judge and the other party and ask that it be introduced. If the other party objects to the introduction of the exhibit the judge will require you to lay a foundation (who prepared the exhibit and when it was prepared) before it can be introduced. An exhibit to prove a fact prepared by a person not a witness at the trial who can be cross-examined may be considered hearsay and not allowed.
13. Take your time when answering questions. Give the question as much thought as you need to understand it and give your answer. You may be asked to explain your answer.
14. Be respectful and courteous with the court. Always address the judge as "Your Honor". Do not interrupt. If something needs to be clarified, wait until it is your turn to speak or ask to speak again.
15. Be sincere. Do not be sarcastic or argue with the court or the other party. Stay calm.
16. If you are stating dates, times and places, etc. be exact. If you cannot be exact, make it understood that you are only estimating.
17. Speak clearly and distinctly, using words, phrases and terminology that you understand. Keep your hands away from your mouth and speak loudly enough so the judge can easily hear you.
18. Remain polite to the judge after the ruling. The judge will prepare a written ruling before it becomes effective.
19. You may bring a friend for moral support. That person must remain silent.
20. Avoid laughing or talking about the case in the hallway or restrooms of the courthouse in such a way that the other party and counsel and witnesses for the other party may see you or hear you.