

Preparing for Court

1. Arrive early for your court hearing and do not be late. However, be prepared to wait in case earlier cases take longer than expected. Give yourself plenty of extra time to get to the Courthouse. Any bags or packages that are brought to court are subject to inspection. Weapons are not permitted. When you come to court, bring copies of any papers you want the Judge to see. The court will keep any item or papers offered in evidence.
2. Dress appropriately. It is important for you to dress in a manner that shows respect for the Court and for the legal proceeding that is taking place. Plan to dress as though you were going to an important job interview or attending a special occasion.
3. Be respectful to everyone. Call the Judge "Your Honor." Always stand when the Judge or other judicial officer enters or leaves the bench. Address all comments to the Judge, except when you are questioning a witness.
4. Listen carefully and wait your turn to speak or respond. Do not interrupt others when they are talking. Everyone will get a chance to tell their side of the story. Be polite even if you do not agree. If you have an objection to testimony or documents presented to the court, your objections have to be made according to court rules and procedures.
5. An official record will be kept of the courtroom proceedings. All of your comments will be recorded. Be sure to speak clearly, slowly, and at a volume that can be heard and understood.
6. If other people are coming with you to court, only bring people who are needed for your case as a witness and maybe a few people to support you. Remember that the appearance and behavior of anyone who joins you in the courtroom will reflect directly on you and your case. Therefore, your friends and family members should dress and act appropriately to show respect for the Court and the important proceedings of which you are a part.
7. Do not bring children with you to court, unless you are specifically asked to do so by the Judge, an attorney or the Guardian ad Litem(GAL) or Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), or unless the child is a witness in the case or will provide information to the judge at the hearing.
8. Turn off cellular phones and pagers while in the courtroom, court offices or when attending conferences called by the court.
9. Be prepared to offer a brief summary of your side of the case. You need to tell the judge exactly what you want.

10. When asking your witnesses questions, it is helpful to start by asking them their name and address. If their job is important to your case, you may want to ask them what their occupation is, what their educational degrees are, and how long they have been doing their job. Then you can ask the specific questions that will bring out the information they have about your case.

11. You have the right to ask the other side and their witnesses questions during the hearing. You also have the right to object to testimony or documents/information presented to the court by the other side. However, you have to state the reason for any objection under the appropriate court rules or Rules of Evidence.

If you need any special arrangements with regard to disabilities or special needs, such as an interpreter, call ahead to the court office. By making arrangements ahead of time for any speech and hearing disabilities, vision problems, handicap accessibility, or language barriers, you can help to ensure that you will receive the best service possible from the Courts.

We truly want your experience with the Indiana Judicial System to be a pleasant one. The better informed and prepared you are, the more likely it is that you will have a positive experience and achieve the results you are hoping for in your case.