

## *Tips for Courtroom Behavior*

- Be on time for your hearing, but plan to be at court all morning; your case might not be the first one called.
- Dress neatly, as if you were going to church or a job interview.
- No food or drinks are allowed in the courtroom.
- Check in at the clerk's office to find out which courtroom to go to. Go into the courtroom and sit quietly to wait for your case to be called.
- Review your paperwork before the hearing. Be familiar with your papers.
- You may use written notes or an outline during the hearing.
- Stick to the FACTS -- do not ramble when giving evidence to support your side of the story.
- When it is time for your hearing, the clerk or judge will probably read all the cases scheduled for hearing at that time.
- When your case is called, walk to the table or podium for lawyers in front of the judge, and stand facing the judge. The judge will instruct the parties when to speak.
- Remember to speak only to the judge and only when it is your turn.
- Do not interrupt or speak to the other party, even if they interrupt or speak to you.
- You want to appear polite and reasonable. Staying calm even when the other party is rude or lies will impress the judge. You will get your turn to calmly prove the other party wrong.
- The Judge may ask you questions. If you do not understand the question, say so.
- Do not answer until you fully understand the question.
- Be direct. If you do not know an answer, say so. Do not be afraid to admit that you do not know something.
- Take your time when answering questions. Give the question as much thought as you need to understand it and come up with your answer. Explain your answer if needed.
- Be respectful and courteous. Always address the judge as "Your Honor." Do not interrupt. If something needs to be explained, wait until it is your turn to speak or ask to speak again.
- Be sincere. Do not be sarcastic or argue with the judge or the other side. Stay calm.
- If you are stating dates, times and places, etc., be exact. If you cannot be exact, say that you are only estimating.
- Speak clearly and distinctly, using words, phrases and terms that you understand.
- Keep your hands away from your mouth and speak loud enough so the judge can easily hear you.
- Remain courteous to the judge after the ruling. The judge must sign the order before it becomes effective.
- You may bring a friend for moral support. That person must remain silent.
- Do not laugh or talk about the case in the hallway or restrooms of the courthouse as the judge, other party or his/her attorney or witnesses may see or hear you.