

If there is an "objection" stop talking. Wait for the judge to rule on the objection. If the objection is "sustained," you may not answer the question. If it is "overruled," you should answer the question. You can ask for the question to be repeated.

Speak clearly and loudly. It is extremely important the judge or jury be able to hear you. Speak slowly. Do not nod or shake your head, but answer with a yes or no. Avoid slang or street language.

Do not guess. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. If you cannot remember, say so.

Do not give your opinion. You need only tell what you saw. You usually should not volunteer your opinion of the facts. The judge wants the facts.



Stay calm and polite. Do not become angry even if the attorney is deliberately insulting you. Never argue with the attorney or the judge. Sometimes, the story you are telling is very upsetting. Try to remain calm and controlled. It is important for the story to be told. Do not refuse to answer questions. Your attorney will object if there is an improper question.

Try not to be nervous. You can only tell your story. After that it is up the judge or jury to make the decision.

Finally and most importantly, tell the truth. Even a little lie can make the judge or jury not believe you. Make sure you have told your attorney the good, the bad and the ugly before the hearing.

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This pamphlet contains general legal information and not specific legal advice. Although the information is believed to accurate at the time of preparation, individual situations may require individual analysis, such that it may be advisable to consult with a lawyer.

**Pennsylvania
LegalAid** Network, Inc.

LSC
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LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION



MidPenn
LEGAL SERVICES



Your Guide To:
Going To Court
Making a Good Impression

ABOUT US

MidPenn Legal Services is a non-profit, public interest law firm that provides high quality free civil legal services to low-income residents and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in 18 counties in Central Pennsylvania: Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Centre, Clearfield, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, Mifflin, Schuylkill & York Counties.

Going to court can be a frightening experience. It is important to remember that the purpose of a hearing is to give the judge or the jury enough information to make a fair decision.

There are a few things you can do to help make a good first impression on the judge or the jury, possibly making you more believable.



Personal Appearance

Going to court is a formal occasion. How you present yourself is important.

You should be clean and neat.

Dress conservatively. Wear subdued colors.

Men should wear dress pants and shirts if possible. A tie is not necessary, but definitely helps.

Women should wear a nice dress, skirt, or dress pants. Do not wear short skirts—more than 2 inches above the knee. It is best to wear neutral colored pantyhose.

Jeans are acceptable, IF they are clean and fairly new.

Do not wear pants that fall below your underwear.

Shirts should be clean and fit properly. Do not wear shirts that show any part of your belly or your cleavage.

Do not wear anything referring to sex, violence, cigarettes, drugs or alcohol or anything with a swear word on it.

Do not wear hooded sweatshirts, tank tops, pajamas, or shorts.

Avoid heavy makeup.

Do not wear a hat.

Do not wear anything with holes or patches.

Do not wear flip-flops or untied sneakers/shoes.

It is better not to wear any facial piercings or show your tattoos. If your tattoo has any naked body parts, swear words, drug or alcohol references or violence, make sure it is covered.

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Your hair should be clean, combed and trimmed. Men, long hair should be tied back.

Be sure your hands and fingernails are clean.

Don't bathe yourself in perfume or cologne.

Nail Polish—keep it simple.

Jewelry—wear minimal amounts such as a watch and one ring.



Know Where To Go

Make sure you know where to go and when to be there. It is a good idea to get there a few minutes early. Be sure to allow time to find parking.

Be Prepared

Your attorney should review your testimony with you before the hearing. Make sure you tell your attorney everything. Even if you think it is not important. It is better for your attorney to know ahead of time.

Personal Behavior

A hearing is a serious matter. You should act serious, but calm. Do not swear, laugh and talk in the courtroom or outside before the hearing. Also, although you may be upset and angry, do not raise your voice in the courtroom or anywhere in the courthouse.

Never chew gum or smoke in the courthouse. Avoid annoying behaviors, such as cracking your knuckles, biting your nails.

Always address the judge as “your honor” or “sir” or “ma’am.” Be polite and courteous to all court personnel.

The Hearing

Listen to all the questions carefully. If you do not understand the question, say so. Answer only the question that was asked, do not volunteer information. However, you can explain an answer, if the question cannot be answered truthfully with a yes or no answer.