

Tips For Court Appearances

1. **Dress in a way that shows respect for the court.** You don't have to buy new clothes for court, but halters tops, worn out jeans, and T-shirts aren't appropriate. Don't chew gum, eat or drink in the courtroom.
2. **Be on time.** If you miss your hearing, the judge can make orders that you might not agree with and which could seriously affect you and your children.
3. **Don't bring children into court.** Many of the topics discussed in court aren't appropriate for young children. Please arrange for a friend or relative to watch your children while you're in court.
4. **Stand when the judge enters or leaves the courtroom.** The court officer will tell you when to sit and stand. If you're in doubt, stand when the judge is standing. You can usually sit down once the judge is seated, unless you're speaking with the judge.
5. **Stand and speak when the judge talks to you.** Remain standing as long as you and the judge are talking. You may need to stay standing even if the judge talks to the person on the other side of your case. If in doubt, ask the judge before sitting down.
6. **The judge will let you know when to speak.** Never get into an argument or even a discussion with the other side in front of the judge. Always speak directly to the judge, unless the judge allows you to answer formal questions from the other side.
7. **Speak clearly and always address the judge as "Your Honor."** The judge must keep order in the courtroom and will be making important decisions about you and your children. Be respectful and understand that the judge likes to keep the proceedings as orderly as possible. This helps keep the process fair to everyone.

8. **Don't talk on your way out, even right outside the door.** Many times another hearing starts as soon as yours ends, and your talking can interfere with the next case.
9. **Make sure that the court has your current mailing address.** The judge may need time to think about how to decide your case and the court will mail the decision to you once it is made. Make sure that the court has your current mailing address.

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/probate-and-family-court>