

# Proper Courtroom Behavior

## PROPER COURTROOM BEHAVIOR

Going to court can be a stressful and scary event. It is important to know how to conduct yourself inside a court room, as your behavior can affect the outcome of your case. There are certain things you will need to do, and other things you should avoid doing when inside the courtroom. The following are some helpful tips and guidelines to follow:

- **DO** turn off all cell phones BEFORE entering the courtroom. (In some courtrooms, your phone may be confiscated by the bailiff if it rings and disrupts court. Some courthouses will not allow you to bring your phone into the courtroom at all).
- **DO NOT** bring food or drinks into the courtroom.
- **DO NOT** chew gum or tobacco in the courtroom.
- **DO** dress appropriately. Avoid T-shirts with offensive writing or pictures, or clothing which is too revealing (for example, tank tops, shorts or skirts that are very short, blouses cut too low).
- **DO** arrive to court on time. If you are late, the judge may have already called and decided on your case in your absence.
- **DO NOT** bring any recording devices into the courtroom (such as camera phones, tape recorders, or digital video recorders).
- **DO** remove any hats BEFORE entering the courtroom. If you do not do so, the bailiff will ask you to remove it.
- **DO NOT** call the judge's office or staff, or the opposing, for information about your case. If you have questions, you should contact YOUR attorney (if you have one) ONLY.

When your case is called for hearing, you will walk up to the judge's bench (where he or she is sitting) with your attorney or, if you do not have an attorney, alone. **DO NOT** bring anyone else up to the bench (for example, relatives or friends) with you. If the judge wants to hear from them, he or she will ask them to come forward.

- **DO NOT** lean on the judge's bench or on any other courtroom furniture.

- **DO NOT** speak unless directly asked a question by the judge or by one of the attorneys. Answer ONLY the question asked, and then stop talking! You have an attorney (if you do) for a reason – allow him or her to do his/her job, which is to speak on your behalf.
- **DO NOT** have any outbursts in the courtroom, no any bickering, fighting, yelling or arguing with anyone in the courtroom.
- **DO NOT** interrupt when other parties or attorneys are speaking. **NEVER** interrupt the judge.
- **DO NOT** call the judge his or her first name, even if you know him/her outside of court. The judge should always be referred to as “Your Honor”.
- **DO** be polite, no matter how you feel. Avoid cursing or foul language.
- **DO NOT** bring your children to court if possible, unless the child is to be interviewed or is required by the court to be present. Please make arrangements to have someone watch the children (the court has a waiting area) until the hearing is concluded.

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