

YOUR FIRST COURTROOM EXPERIENCE

How you prepare for court will depend on your case, but here are some general guidelines to help you navigate your first courtroom experience.

Conduct a dry run

From navigating parking to going through security, understanding what to expect can help calm your nerves.

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Show up at least an hour early

After you go through security, check the directory to see where your courtroom is. If you need to file court papers, go to the central clerk's office and then proceed to the courtroom.

3

Get to know your judge.

Observe hearings ahead of time, ideally in front of your judge and the same type of case. Understanding your judge's preferences and peculiarities can help you anticipate what to expect.

4

Check the docket listing.

This is where all the cases that the court will hear that day will be posted. Enter the courtroom and check in with the judge's clerk or legal assistant.

5

Familiarize yourself with the local rules of court.

Understanding the practical and procedural rules of the court is a necessary part of trial preparation.

6

Be polite.

From introducing yourself to clerk to being courteous to security guards, politeness towards all court staff will pay dividends.

7

Confirm.

Check the court calendar the day before your hearing to confirm the day and time.

8

Find opposing counsel.

Introduce yourself to your opposing counsel and discuss any housekeeping items.

9

Prepare your documents.

Prepare and organize four copies of all documents that have been filed or served, and any additional documents you need to show the judge. Don't forget to bring a clean copy of the pleadings.

10

Use your waiting time wisely.

Observe other hearings and absorb all the information you can. Every appearance in court should be treated as a learning opportunity.

11

Prepare yourself.

Sleep, eat, and dress well. Take all necessary steps to ensure you are physically and mentally prepared for your appearance.

12

Go!

When your matter is called, stand behind the table designated for you. Let your organization and preparation take over!

