

# Tips for Your Court Appearance

**1. Dress conservatively.** Don't assume dressing "up" is always better. Clean, neat clothes and hair are important in the courts initial impression of you.

**2. Remain calm.**

This is crucial, especially for women. In an adversarial hearing, people may actually try to upset you, so don't let them.

You are testifying every minute you are in the courtroom. Always assume that the court is watching your mannerisms and facial expressions. Don't respond to other people's testimony by making faces or comments.

**3. Ask questions respectfully.**

It is okay to say, "Excuse me Your Honor, I don't understand." The judge would not want you to proceed and agree if you don't understand. If the judge uses words you don't know, ask for another word.

**4. Tell the truth.**

Don't lie in court for anyone. Even if you feel you have a compelling reason to lie, perjury is a crime. You will lose credibility with the court if you are found to be untruthful.

**5. Find out as much as you can about the type of hearing you are attending.** *The laws are not a secret!* Most libraries have copies of state laws and books on how to help yourself as you navigate the legal system.

**6. Be careful about talking to the opposing attorney.** They may try to intimidate you and get you to agree to things not in your best interest. Make sure you know all your options *before* you sign anything.