

# Tips for Going to Court

## Preparing for Court

The best way to prepare for talking in court is to watch other people in court. You can go to the courthouse and sit in the courtroom to watch other court cases. It is best to do this at least a few days ahead of your court appearance, so you can prepare your speaking notes.

## Tips for Appearing in Court

### Appearing in-person

- **Show up early.** Your courthouse might have security, which can take time to get through. You will also need time to find the right courtroom.
- **Find the right courtroom.** If there is an electronic notice board in the lobby, look for your case and room number on there. If you cannot find your matter on the board, then ask at the information desk.
- **Find out what number your case is.** Each courtroom has a list that shows all the cases being heard. Sometimes this list is outside of the courtroom in paper or electronic form. You can also ask the clerk inside the courtroom before court begins. This will give you an idea of when the judge will hear your case.
- **Introduce yourself to the clerk.** Once the courtroom is open, introduce yourself to the clerk. Let the clerk know what case you are there for.
- **Take a seat in the courtroom.** You must sit behind the railing in the courtroom. Only lawyers can sit on the other side of the railing. Do not leave the courtroom before the judge calls your number. Sometimes the judge does not hear the cases in the same order as on the list. You do not want to miss your number.
- **Stand when the judge comes in.** The clerk will open a back door for the judge to come through and ask that everyone rise. The judge will tell everyone when they can sit down again.
- **Stand up when the judge calls your number.** Walk to the large desks in front of the judge. You will take one side and the other person will take the other side.
- **Introduce yourself to the judge.** Tell the judge your name and introduce why you are there. After both people introduce themselves, the applicant tells the judge their side of the story. Once the applicant finishes, the respondent can speak.

## Appearing remotely (online video or telephone)

- **Login or call in early.** The court will provide you with login or dial in information. Make sure you are logged into the video platform or on the phone at least 15 minutes before the start time.
- **Dress and act as if you were at the courthouse.** An appearance by video or phone is still a court appearance, even if you are sitting in your living room!
- **Make sure you have a good connection.** Disconnect other devices from the internet to avoid bandwidth issues. Use a headset with a microphone if you have one to reduce background noise and allow you to hear better.
- **Do not multi-task.** Focus on the hearing. You might miss something if you are also checking your emails, trying to look after others, etc.

The **Provincial Court** has instructions and guidelines for remote appearances here: <https://bit.ly/3maLwNz>

The **Court of Queen's Bench** has instructions and guidelines for remote appearances here: <https://bit.ly/2Pub4cz>

## When you are speaking to the judge

- Stand when you are speaking to a judge. When the other person is speaking to the judge, you can sit down. If you are online, you do not have to stand but you should be alert and upright.
- Correctly address the judge.
- Do not interrupt the judge.
- Do not interrupt when the other person is speaking. You will have a chance to respond.
- Take notes while the other side is talking, so that you can respond completely.

**Judges have different names in the different courts.**

- The **Provincial Court** has judges. You should address the judge as “Your Honour” or “Sir/Madam”.
- The **Court of Queen’s Bench** has justices and Masters. You should address the justice as “My Lord/Lady” or “Sir/Madam”. You should address the Master as “Sir/Madam”.

A **Master** is a judicial officer in the Court of Queen’s Bench with authority to hear and decide on certain types of court orders. A Master is not a judge or justice.

You can watch a video about courtroom etiquette: <https://bit.ly/3maZoHs>

You can find tips on courtroom etiquette here: <https://bit.ly/31GCa2t>

**DUTY COUNSEL**

Duty counsel are available across the province to help you in some situations. They are lawyers who provide information, guidance and advice to you before your court appearance. Services may be virtual or in-person.

**Legal Aid Alberta** can provide duty counsel if you are unrepresented for your first court appearance in some criminal, family and child welfare docket courts. Contact Legal Aid Alberta for more information: 1.866.845.3425 or [www.legalaid.ab.ca](http://www.legalaid.ab.ca).

The **Queen’s Bench Court Assistance Program** helps self-represented litigants with civil cases in the Court of Queen’s Bench.

**Civil Claims Duty Counsel** help self-represented litigants with civil cases in the Provincial Court.

To apply for help from the Queen’s Bench Court Assistance Program or Civil Claims Duty Counsel, visit [www.pbla.ca](http://www.pbla.ca) or call 403-541-4804.

For more information about where to find legal help, visit: [www.lawcentralalberta.ca/en/help](http://www.lawcentralalberta.ca/en/help)

## Dress Code

You do not have to wear a suit and tie or a dress. You might want to wear something similar to what you would wear if you were going to a job interview. Do not wear a hat!

## Resources

### CPLEA

Information booklets, FAQs and videos on many areas of the law and court process in Alberta.

[cplea.ca/resources](https://cplea.ca/resources)

### LawCentral Alberta

(a CPLEA website)

List of legal clinics and organizations in Alberta providing free or low-cost legal services.

[lawcentralalberta.ca/clinics](https://lawcentralalberta.ca/clinics)

List of more resources for preparing for court.

[lawcentralalberta.ca/preparing-court](https://lawcentralalberta.ca/preparing-court)

### Alberta Courts

Information about the courts in Alberta, including forms and court processes.

[www.albertacourts.ca](https://www.albertacourts.ca)

### Resolution and Court

#### Administration Services (RCAS)

Government service providing resolution and court support for Albertans.

[www.alberta.ca/rcas.aspx](https://www.alberta.ca/rcas.aspx)

### Alberta Law Libraries

Access to legal information and resources.

[lawlibrary.ab.ca](https://lawlibrary.ab.ca)