

GUIDELINES FOR COURTROOM BEHAVIOR

1. Be on time for your hearing or trial and allow plenty of time to get to the courtroom. If there is not free parking at your local court, make sure you have enough money to park at a meter or use a pay parking lot. If you have to pay to park, plan for extra time because hearings can take longer than scheduled. You will not be able to stop the hearing just to feed the meter.
2. Know which courtroom your hearing or trial will be in. It should be stated on the trial scheduling order or notice of hearing.
3. Dress neatly. You do not need to buy new clothes or wear a suit but your clothes should be clean and without holes. Take your hat and sunglasses off when in the courtroom.
4. Certain behaviors are not allowed because they are noisy, distracting or disrespectful. You cannot: chew gum, eat, sleep, wear a hat, listen to earphones, text, talk on your phone, take photographs, or carry a weapon.
5. Do not bring your children. Make arrangements for someone to take care of them.
6. Review your paperwork before the hearing or trial so you are familiar with everything that has been filed and any orders the judge has issued in writing. It is helpful to have everything organized in a binder and bring it to court.
7. Bring your records and documents you want the court to consider so you can refer to them. Bring a notepad and pens for taking notes during the hearing.
8. If you have a trial, prepare your exhibits before you come to court. This involves selecting the exhibits, marking them with exhibit stickers, making the correct number of copies, including a cover sheet and exchanging with the other side. Learn more at: <http://courts.alaska.gov/shc/family/shctrtrial-formal.htm#13a>.
9. If you have a trial, make sure you know what type: formal or informal trial? Learn about the different trial types: <http://courts.alaska.gov/shc/family/shcdr-trials.htm>. Different rules apply for each type so ask the judge if you don't know which type.
10. Treat everyone with respect, including the opposing party, the judge, any witnesses and the court staff. Stand when the judge enters or leaves the courtroom. Remove your hat and turn off your cell phone. Address the judge as "your honor."
11. When the judge asks you to speak, stand up and face the judge. The judge will let you know if it is ok to remain seated.
12. When the judge, other side's lawyer or other side if self-represented, asks you questions, be direct. If you don't know an answer say so. Do not be afraid to say that you do not know something. Take your time when answering questions so you can give the answer as much thought as you need.

13. Speak clearly and distinctly, using words, phrases and terminology that you understand. You do not need to use legal language. Proceedings in Alaska are recorded, so it is important that you speak loudly and clearly enough for the recording equipment. Keep your hands away from your mouth when you speak.
14. Bring an outline of what you want to say. As you cover each point, check it off. Before you finish, look back to see if you covered everything. Judges do not like prepared statements. The Judge will only want to hear information that is needed to decide the requests made in the documents that were filed. Practice explaining your request to a friend. If your friend doesn't understand you or find your argument convincing, think about how to improve your presentation.
15. Do not interrupt anyone and do not argue with the opposing party. The judge will give each side an opportunity to present their information so wait your turn and you will be able to speak. Talk directly to the judge and not to the opposing party. Ask the judge for permission to speak if you need to say something and think the judge is moving on to something else. If you need something to be clarified, wait until it is your turn to speak or ask to speak again.
16. Control your emotions and stay calm even if the person testifying is hurting your feelings or lying. It is ok to be upset or cry. However, do not yell, be sarcastic, roll your eyes, throw your hands up, pound on the table or storm out of the hearing. If you need time to compose yourself, ask the judge for a brief break.
17. Before you leave the courtroom, make sure you understand what happens next. Do you need to come back for another court hearing? Do you need to prepare any written documents to file? Do you need to take other steps or actions? Will the Judge send an order by mail? Politely ask questions if you do not understand what will happen next.
18. Remain courteous to the judge after the ruling. Ask the judge who will write up the order. The judge must sign the order before it becomes effective. Make sure you understand what is going to happen next before you leave the courtroom.
19. You may bring a friend for moral support but that person must remain silent.
20. Avoid laughing or talking about the case in the hallway or restrooms of the courthouse in such a way that people, lawyers or witnesses involved in the case may see you or hear you.
21. Make sure the court has your current mailing address and phone number. If safety is a concern, you can ask for the information to be made confidential. If your case involves children, keep your contact information updated if you move even after your case is done.