

Getting Ready to Go to Court

Before your court date, there are several things to do to get ready:

1. Read and become familiar with the Rules of Civil Procedure and Rules of Evidence and the statutes and case law which apply to your case. You can find the rules, statutes, and case law in a law library if your county has one. You can also go to www.TexasLawHelp.org, which you can reach by clicking the TexasLawHelp button on this website. They have information about many different laws. Remember that the judge will require you to follow the same rules that lawyers follow, so be as prepared as you can be.
2. Gather and organize all the papers you and the other side have filed and then read them. Make sure you have given the other side a copy of all the papers you have filed or given to the court. Read everything the other side has filed.
3. Make several copies of the papers you want to give the judge as evidence (called “exhibits”) and research how to present them to the judge in the Rules of Evidence. Some courts require that you have your evidence exhibits numbered before your trial, but not at regular hearings. It is a good idea to check this in advance.
4. Decide who you want to testify as witnesses for you, and make sure that they are going to be in court. You cannot tell the judge what someone else said – this is called “hearsay” and cannot be used as evidence. If you need someone’s statement to be evidence, the person who made the statement needs to testify. Write out the questions you are going to ask the witnesses ahead of time. Always start with their name, address, and where they work. Go over the questions with the witnesses to help you and the witnesses get ready.
5. Decide what you are going to tell the judge. Write it down in an outline, and practice it. This will help make sure you don’t forget anything.
6. Before your court date, try to visit a courtroom while court is going on. Call the clerk’s office to find out the court’s schedule so you can go watch the court in action. This will help you see how a trial works and may help you be less nervous when it is time to go to court for your case.