

How To Handle Witnesses When Representing Yourself



Can I have people testify in support of my case?

Yes. Witnesses can be very helpful in your court hearing. A witness can back up your version of what happened. When you are done with your testimony, you should ask the judge to hear from your witnesses. Ask your witnesses questions that explain who the person is and what incident they saw.

Your witness must come to the hearing. A handwritten note from the person will not be accepted by the Court. A witness does not need a subpoena but you may need one if the witness may not show up or needs to take time off work. If your witness says s/he needs a subpoena, ask the Clerk of Courts for a subpoena form to fill out and serve.



How do I prepare my witness?

1. Thank about the most valuable thing each witness could say on your behalf
2. Write down a few questions that will help the witness get the idea across.
3. Practice with your witness ahead of time, so you know what answers will be given.



At the Court hearing:

Rules to follow:

1. Keep your questions short.
2. If you do not get the answer you were expecting from a witness, do not argue with them or accuse them of lying.
3. Be polite.
4. If a witness refuses to answer a question, ask the Judge to make them answer.

Your witness:

1. Start by asking the witness their name and address.
2. If your witness is a professional, you should ask what their job is, what their education degrees are, and how long they have been doing their job.
3. Then ask them specific questions about the case.
4. You cannot "lead" the witness. This means you cannot give the witness the answer you want. You must ask open-ended questions. For example: "How did my son look when my husband dropped him off at your home?"

Witness for the other side (cross examination):

1. You CAN lead the witness. For example: "Isn't it true that you saw my husband slap our son."

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