

Preparing for your **SMALL CLAIMS TRIAL**

Do you have an upcoming small claims trial? The best thing you can do is be prepared. Here are some tips to help you.

BEFORE GOING TO COURT

Prepare Your Case



Read the court papers you and the other party filed. Understand what you are asking the court to do or decide.



Put together your evidence. This is the information you can present to the judge to prove your case. Organize it so you can find it easily during your trial.



Make an outline of your case. Include each request you want to make and a list of reasons why. Write down what requests you think the other party will make and have an answer ready for those.



Write down a brief summary of your case and your point of view about the issues.

What types of evidence can I present?

You may bring physical evidence, called "exhibits." These can be things like photographs, videos, police reports, medical bills, text messages, social media posts, or other documents that help prove your case.

You can also bring witnesses to give statements about your case. Their statements are called "testimony."



ON THE DAY OF COURT

Present Your Case

When your case is called, walk to the table at the front of the courtroom. Present your summary. During your trial, look at your notes and outline to help you make sure you're not forgetting anything. This can also help you calm down if you get nervous.

Don't rely on the judge to ask you questions or remember everything you asked for. If something doesn't get asked, bring it up.



Pay close attention to what the judge says. Make sure you understand the court orders and what you need to do when the trial is over. If you don't understand something, tell the judge right away.

More Tips on Going to Court:

- Get to court on time, or better yet, early.
- Refer to the judge as "Your Honor."
- Speak clearly and loudly and ONLY when it is your turn.
- Do not interrupt the judge or the other side.

For more information, go to www.courts.ca.gov/1094.htm.



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