

## Respect

The courtroom is a place of order and structure. You should at all times act in a respectful manner when in the presence of the judge, court staff, attorneys, court officers and other persons attending court. Once the court has made a ruling in your case, continue to be respectful as you exit the courtroom. Attempts to disrupt the court once the judge has made a ruling may result in jail time.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What time is my hearing?

If you have questions about your case such as the time or date of your hearing, you can contact the court clerk's office for assistance. You may also ask for directions to the court and the courtroom that you should appear.

### What if I need special assistance?

If you have a disability, speak another language, or require special accommodations in the courtroom, please call before your hearing to allow the court time to properly assist you.

### What should I do if I cannot appear at my hearing?

If you are not able to appear in court, contact the court clerk at least 48-hours before your scheduled hearing. If you do not appear at your hearing and fail to notify the court, a warrant may be issued for your arrest in criminal cases. You should also keep in mind that a judge may make a ruling in your case without you being present, such as civil matters like a divorce hearing.

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*This brochure was created by the joint efforts of the Georgia Commission on Access and Fairness in the Courts and the Administrative Office of the Courts' Research Division. The Administrative Office of the Courts serves all classes of courts and acts as secretariat to judicial branch agencies and committees. The agency takes a leadership role in projects to improve the court system and increase system responsiveness to the citizens it serves. The agency staffs the Judicial Council and works closely with the Supreme Court of Georgia.*

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# BASIC RULES OF COURT CONDUCT

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If you have been ordered to appear in court, this brochure will provide important information that will assist you before your appearance. This information does not constitute legal advice. If you require legal assistance, please consult an attorney.

## When Appearing in Court

- Be on time
- Throw away gum, food, and drinks before entering the courtroom
- Stand when the judge enters and leaves the courtroom
- Stand when you are speaking to the judge
- Speak clearly when you respond to the judge's questions
- Always address the judge as "Your Honor"
- Never interrupt the judge. If you are unsure of what you heard, wait until the judge or other person speaking at your hearing has finished talking before asking a question
- Enter and leave the courtroom quietly, so you do not disturb others
- Only approach the bench when instructed to do so

## Dressing for Court

If you are appearing in court you should dress nicely and in a manner that shows respect for the court.

Here are some things you should **NOT** wear:

- Hats inside the courtroom (except those worn for religious purposes)
- Sunglasses
- T-shirts depicting violence, sexual acts, profanity, or illegal drugs
- Tube or halter tops/ plunging necklines/ midriffs
- Ripped or torn jeans
- Mini skirts or shorts
- Baggy pants that fall below the waist
- Muscle shirts (usually worn as undergarments)

***If you are not dressed properly, you will be asked to leave the court and return at a later date. This will delay your hearing and require you to appear in court more than once.***

## Prohibited Item

Items that should **NOT** enter the courtroom:

- Weapons of any kind
- Electronic equipment such as video, voice recorders or cameras (unless approved by the court)
- Food, beverages, chewing gum and tobacco

## Children in the Courtroom

Please do not bring children to court unless the court has ordered them to be present. Many topics discussed in the courtroom are not appropriate for children and may be hurtful or confusing. Please arrange for a friend or relative to watch your child(ren) while you are in court.

## Cell Phones and Pagers

The use of cell phones are not allowed in the courtroom. Your cell phone or pager must be turned off before entering so that you do not disrupt the court. If you are required to carry a phone or pager for business purposes, it must be placed on silent mode.

## Security Precautions

Before entering the court you may go through a security checkpoint. In most cases, you will be asked to walk through a metal detector or an officer will use a wand to check for prohibited items. You should allow the officer to search any bags, packages or personal belongings that will be taken into the courtroom. If you refuse to cooperate, you may be denied entry to your hearing.

