

Top 10 Tips Preparing for Court

- 1) Dress in your best clothing with proper grooming as if you are going to a very special occasion. Leave gum, food and drinks outside the courthouse and court rooms.
- 2) When you speak, be respectful
- 3) Inform your Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) or lawyer of your decision to speak to the judge or testify.
- 4) Ask permission to speak in the courtroom by raising your hand and waiting to be acknowledged by the judge. Address judges, attorneys and social workers as sir or ma'am.
- 5) Arrive 15-20 minutes before the hearing.
- 6) Prior to the hearing, decide your issue or opinion and prepare clear, concise and positive statements to support them.
- 7) Stay on topic. Make all of your statements and comments relevant to the issue before the court.
- 8) Always tell the truth. Be accurate in your answers and presentation. If you do not know the answer to a question, it is okay to say, "I don't know."
- 9) Listen patiently to the other court participants' statements and point of view.
- 10) If you disagree with a decision, respond with a respectful disagreement and ask for an opportunity to offer additional reasons or make a new request in the future.
- 11) Bonus: Many courtrooms do not allow cellphones. Check with your caseworker before the hearing. If they are allowed put them on silent.