

Basic Rules of Court Conduct

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. For more information about specific court policies, or if you have any questions that are not covered in this brochure, please call the Clerk's office at 478-934-3210 ext. 2.

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When Appearing in Court

- Be on Time.
- **Enter the courthouse through the rear door. All other doors will be locked while court is in session.**
- Discard gum, food or drinks before entering the courtroom.
- Stand when the judge enters and leaves the courtroom.
- Stand when you are speaking to the judge.
- Speak loudly and 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 has finished talking before asking a question.
- Enter and leave the courtroom quietly, so you do not disturb others.
- Only approach the bench if instructed to do so.

Items that should NOT enter the courtroom:

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



Cell Phones & Mobile Devices

The use of cell phones and other mobile devices is not allowed in the courtroom. Please leave it in your vehicle or at home. Exceptions may be made for attorneys or other court officials. Violators of this order will be subject to a minimum \$50 fine.

Dressing for Court

You should dress nicely and in a manner that shows respect for the court. Dressy casual is the dress code. It is suggested that you layer your clothing in order that you may be as

Here are some things you should NOT wear:

- Hats or other head coverings 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 or revealing necklines/bare midriffs;
- Ripped, torn or dirty jeans;
- Miniskirts or shorts;
- Baggy pants that fall below the waist;
- Sleeveless dresses or shirts, or muscle shirts (usually worn as undergarments).

If you are not dressed properly, you will be asked to leave the court, and may be held in contempt of court, which includes a \$50 fine minimum. This will delay your hearing and require you to appear in court more than once.

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 could result in your being held in contempt (which could include jail time and/or a fine).

Frequently Asked Questions

What time is my hearing?

Your notice to appear gives you the time court begins. It is recommended that you be in the courtroom at that hour as cases are not called in numeric order, and be prepared to wait.

What if I need special assistance?

If you have a disability, do not speak or understand English well, or require special accommodations in the courtroom, please call the Clerk's office at least 10 business days 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 Clerk's office at least 48 hours before your scheduled hearing. If a medical emergency arises, please have someone contact the

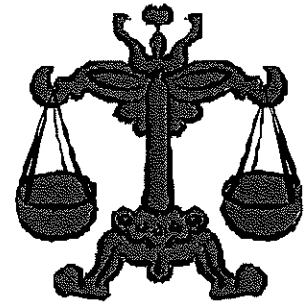
Clerk's office immediately. A doctor's excuse is required.

If you do not appear at your hearing and fail to notify the court, the judge will issue a warrant for your arrest in criminal cases. You should also keep in mind that a judge may make a ruling in your civil case if you fail to come to court after being properly noticed in divorce, child support, and temporary protective order hearings, to name a few.

Security Precautions

When entering the courthouse while court is in session, you will go through a security checkpoint, and be asked to walk through a metal detector. An officer or bailiff may use a wand to check for prohibited items. Purses, packages and personal belongings should not be brought into the courthouse. But if necessary, they are subject to be searched by security personnel. If you refuse to cooperate, you will be denied entry to the courtroom, and may be arrested.

* Created by the Georgia Commission on Access and Fairness in the Courts and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Research Division, in collaboration with the Judicial Qualifications Commission.



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