

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR SARASOTA, MANATEE, AND DESOTO COUNTIES, FLORIDA

_____,
Petitioner,

Case No.: _____

and

_____,
Respondent.
_____ /

TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
FAMILY DIVISION
RULES OF COURTROOM ETIQUETTE

Lawyers who appear in court must follow the court's rules of behavior and etiquette. People who appear in court without a lawyer must follow the same rules of behavior. Each judge, magistrate and hearing officer sets the rules for his or her courtroom, but there are a number of rules and standards accepted and enforced in every courtroom. Each lawyer and party must be respectful to the court, the court staff, the witnesses, the bailiffs and each other. Additional rules for courtroom behavior are as follows:

1. Be aware that the judges, general magistrates, hearing officers, or any other court personnel cannot give you legal advice. You may only obtain legal advice from an attorney. You may obtain general information from the Twelfth Judicial Circuit's website at www.jud12.flcourts.org.
2. Arrive at least twenty (20) minutes before your hearing is scheduled to begin. There are unpredictable times when legal emergencies pressure the court to begin as early as possible. You should know that a judge may also dismiss your case if you are not present at the scheduled time.
3. All persons appearing before the court must dress in an appropriate manner. Shorts, hats, flip-flops, jeans, sneakers, tee shirts, and tank tops are not suitable for the courtroom.
4. Do not bring food or beverages into the courtroom. Never chew gum or use tobacco products in the courtroom.
5. Turn off your cell phone.
6. Do not bring children to the courthouse unless the judge or your attorney requests that you do so.
7. Stand when you are addressing the court and address the judge as "your honor."

8. Be prepared for court. Familiarize yourself with the issues, read the pleadings and other documents, and be prepared to present your case to the court.
9. Bring with you any evidence and witnesses you wish the court to consider. The court cannot consider written statements from witnesses.
10. Be aware that you must state in your pleadings the relief you want. The court cannot grant relief that you do not request in your pleadings.
11. Bring several copies of any documents that you intend to offer into evidence. You must provide a copy to the opposing party and his/her attorney. Each copy should be labeled "exhibit" and indicate the case number, names of the parties, the date, and have a space for the judge's signature.
12. Tell the truth. Any false statement made to the court under oath is perjury, which is a crime.
13. Be courteous. Do not interrupt the judge, any party, or any witness who is speaking. You will have the opportunity to present your case.
14. Speak directly to the judge or your attorney. Do not argue with the judge, the opposing party, his/her attorney, or a witness.
15. Be aware that any witnesses you bring with you to court may or may not be permitted in the courtroom with you until it is his/her turn to testify.
16. Do not call or write the judge a letter. The judge cannot talk to you or consider any written or oral evidence out of the presence of both parties.
17. Be respectful to all court personnel, including the judges, general magistrates, hearing officers, bailiffs, case managers, judicial assistants, clerks, and all other court staff.

I have read and agree to abide by the rules of courtroom etiquette.

Signature of Litigant

Date