

A guide to representing yourself

Attending court – the day of your hearing

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The day of your hearing

The day of your hearing has arrived. Before leaving home, check you have everything you need.

Bring all documents you intend to rely on during the hearing, arranged neatly in a folder and clearly labelled. If you refer to a document during your hearing, the judge will expect you to say the name of the document and the page and paragraph number you are referring to. Bring something to write on, for example a pen and notepad, tablet or laptop.

Check the address of the court building. The Daily Hearing List, on the Supreme Court website, has the courtroom number and name of the judge hearing your proceeding. The list is updated with this information at about 3.15pm on the business day before your hearing.

Check your arrangements for transport (public transport or carparking), childcare and work, and consider having a plan in place if your hearing takes longer than you expect.

Make sure you allow plenty of time to get to Court. Parties are expected to attend any hearings the Court schedules. If you cannot attend for any substantial reason, for example if you have a medical emergency, contact the Court immediately. **If you fail to attend your hearing, the matter may be considered in your absence and may be dismissed or an order made against you.**

Going through security

Security officers will screen you and your bags before you enter any Court building. Make sure you allow enough time for this. Sometimes there is a queue, especially at peak times from 9am-10.30am and 1.30pm-2.30pm.

Leave at home any sharp or potentially dangerous objects, such as nail files, scissors, glass bottles and cans. Bike helmets and alcohol are also not allowed. These items will generally be confiscated until you leave the Court.

Once you have cleared security, follow the signs or ask for directions to your courtroom.

When you arrive at the courtroom

When you arrive at the courtroom, report to the Court Officer who will show you where to sit. You normally sit at the bar table near the front of the courtroom.

If friends or family are attending your hearing, they must sit in the area reserved for the public. This is usually at the back of the courtroom. Friends or family are not allowed to speak to the Judge or ask questions on your behalf during the proceeding (unless the Judge gives them permission).

Turn off your mobile phone or put it on silent.

Be prepared to wait your turn – your case may be one of several listed to be heard in the courtroom that day. The Court Officer will call your matter when it is your turn.

During the hearing

Stand up when the Judge enters the courtroom.

If you are the applicant, you will be expected to present your case to the Judge first. The Judge will tell you when it is your turn to speak.

You must stand up when you are being spoken to or when you are invited to speak, otherwise remain quietly seated.

Refer to the Judge as “Your Honour” or if there is more than one Judge say “Your Honours”.

Speak with confidence, plainly, politely and with respect.

Make your points logically and simply. The Judge will ask the other party to respond to your comments. You should return to your seat when the other party is speaking. Stand again whenever the Judge speaks to you and whenever you are answering the Judge's questions.

During the hearing you cannot speak directly to the other party but must direct any comments or questions to the Judge. Listen to the questions the Judge asks you and answer them carefully and clearly. If you do not understand something or do not hear a question, politely ask the Judge to repeat or rephrase the question.

Near the end of the hearing, the Judge will advise you of their decision, or whether they will make their decision at a later date.

If you have to leave the courtroom for any reason before the Judge, bow to the Judge when you are at the door of the courtroom and about to exit.

Leaving the courtroom

If there are no further matters after yours, the Judge will rise and the Court will be adjourned. You may then leave the courtroom.

If there are other matters following yours, you may leave the courtroom at the conclusion of your hearing by walking to the rear of the courtroom and bowing to the Judge, before quietly exiting through the courtroom door.

More information

More information is on the Supreme Court website www.supremecourt.vic.gov.au. From the home page, click on Representing yourself. This takes you to the guides, videos and resources developed specifically for people who represent themselves in Court. You can also find links to organisations that provide free or low-cost legal help.

Trial Division proceedings

The Supreme Court has a Self-represented Litigant Coordinator who specialises in helping people with Trial Division proceedings who do not have a lawyer. You can make an appointment with the Coordinator to discuss Court process and to check you have the right documents. The Coordinator is not allowed to give legal advice.

Address for appointments with the Self-represented Litigant Coordinator
Principal Registry, Level 2, 436 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm, closed public holidays

Phone: 03 9603 9300 (general enquiries) Phone: 03 9603 9240 (Self-represented Litigant Coordinator)

Email for self-represented litigants: unrepresented@supcourt.vic.gov.au

Court of Appeal proceedings

Address for filing documents in person and paying court fees
Court of Appeal Registry, Level 1, 436 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm, closed public holidays

Phone: 03 9603 9100 (general enquiries)

Email: coaregistry@supcourt.vic.gov.au