

SUGGESTIONS FOR TESTIFYING

1. Dress professionally and comfortably. Conservative dress is most appropriate. This may be a suit, skirt and blouse, or dress with hose or dress pants. Flat or low heels are appropriate and most comfortable. Avoid mini-skirts, low-cut blouses, etc. Minimal jewelry is suggested. Be conservative with cosmetics, fingernails, and hair.
2. No chewing gum or eating candy. Breath mints and cough drops, if used, should be subtle. Food and drinks are usually limited to the cafeteria and should not be brought into the courtroom.
3. Be prepared to wait. Beware of listening ears. You never know who may be listening. There may be defense attorneys, reporters or adversaries nearby.
4. When taking the oath, stand upright; pay attention and clearly say "I do".
5. Be serious, attentive and courteous in court.
6. Speak clearly and loudly enough so that the judge or juror farthest from you can hear you easily.
7. Before you testify, try to picture what happened so that you can recall more accurately when you are asked. Do not memorize what you are going to say for you may become confused if you forget any part of your memorized statement.
8. Tell the truth. You are sworn to do so. Do not stop to figure out whether your answer will help or hurt. Just answer the questions truthfully to the best of your memory. Do not exaggerate and do not make up answers.
9. Listen carefully to each question asked. Understand the question and have it repeated, if necessary. If you do not understand the question, tell the court you do not understand. Do not rush to answer, but do not delay in answering simple questions if you are sure you know the answer.
10. Answer only the question asked you. Do not volunteer information. Explain your answer, if necessary. Give the answer in your own words, and if a question cannot be truthfully answered with a "Yes" or "No", you have the right to explain the answer.
11. If you don't want to answer a question, don't ask the judge whether you must answer it. If it is an improper question, the prosecutor will rise and state an objection. Otherwise, you should answer the question as you would any other.
12. Stop instantly when the judge interrupts you, or when an attorney objects to a question.
13. Do not shake your head indicating a "Yes" or "No" answer. Answer every question with your own words. Speak so the court reporter (or recording device) can hear the answer.
14. Give positive, definite answers when possible. Avoid saying, "I think", or "I believe", if you can be positive. If your answer is only an estimate about distances or time or other such factors, be sure to state it is only an estimate.
15. Above all, do not lose your temper.