

FREE GUIDE

Court Preparation Checklist

Free and confidential help in your language for people facing criminal charges in the United States.



GuardLine Defense | guardlinedefense.com

GuardLine Defense is a free attorney-matching and information service. We are not a law firm, we do not provide legal advice, and using this resource does not create an attorney-client relationship. Attorney advertising. We never charge you and are never paid a percentage of any attorney's fees. If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

Court Preparation Checklist

Your first court date can feel scary, but getting ready can help you feel more in control. This free checklist gives simple steps to help you prepare for a criminal court hearing and protect your rights.

KNOW YOUR BASIC RIGHTS

- You have the right to remain silent.
- You have the right to a defense, no matter your immigration status.
- Do not explain your case to police, prosecutors, or court staff without a lawyer.
- Ask for an interpreter if you need one to understand or speak in court.
- Do not sign papers you do not understand.
- Stay calm and speak respectfully, even if you feel stressed.

GATHER IMPORTANT PAPERS

- Bring any court notice, ticket, charging paper, or bond papers you have.
- Make a list of your full name, date of birth, and case number if you know it.
- Bring photo ID if you have it.
- Carry the name and phone number of a trusted family member or friend.
- Put all papers in one folder so they are easy to find.
- If anything was taken from you, write down what it was and when it happened.



GET READY BEFORE COURT

- Find out the court address, room number, and how long it may take to get there.

- Plan your ride early so you can arrive with extra time.
- Wear clean, simple clothes if you can.
- Turn off or silence your phone before going into court.
- Eat something and bring needed medicine if allowed.
- If you care for children, try to arrange child care before court.
- If you may miss work, tell your employer as early as you can.

PROTECT YOURSELF AT COURT

- Do not talk about the facts of your case in the hallway, bathroom, or waiting area.
- Do not post about your case on social media.
- If anyone asks questions about the case, say you want to speak with a lawyer first.
- Listen carefully when your name is called.
- Answer only the question asked, and keep your words short and clear.
- If you do not understand something, say, "I do not understand" or ask for it to be repeated.



ASK FOR THE RIGHT HELP

- If you do not have a lawyer, ask how to request one or ask for time to find one.
- If your case may affect your immigration situation, try to speak with a criminal defense lawyer who understands immigration concerns.
- Use GuardLine Defense, a free attorney-matching service, to help you find a lawyer.
- Tell your lawyer about any immigration process, past arrests, past convictions, or prior court orders.
- Tell your lawyer if you are in fear, have health needs, or need language help.

- Keep a small notebook with names, phone numbers, and what happened in court.





You do not have to face court alone, and you do not have to answer questions about your case without a lawyer. GuardLine Defense is a free attorney-matching service that can help you look for legal help.

Want a real person to help? Get matched with a criminal defense attorney for free at guardlinedefense.com — in your language, no obligation.

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