
Court Etiquette

Courtroom etiquette is the code that governs the conduct of persons in the courtroom. A trial is a solemn inquiry. This solemnity is maintained by the behaviour of persons in the courtroom.

The first step in advocacy is to create a favourable impression.

1. Dress

Be sure you, your witnesses, and supporters are neatly dressed.

2. Terms of Address

- **Address others in the courtroom:**
 - The judge as “Your Honour”;
 - The prosecutor by title and surname “Mr. Doe or Ms. Jones” or as Mr. or Madam Crown counsel.
 - The Sheriff as “Mr. or Madam Sheriff”;
 - The court clerk as “Mr. or Madam Clerk”
 - The witness by title and surname. If the witness is a child then by Miss or Master and surname or if the child consents then by first name.
- Never refer to a person by first name only.

3. Decorum

- **Be on time.** Go to the courtroom and stay there until your name is called.
- **Go into the courtroom** and remain there until your case is called.
- **Speak** calmly and clearly. Do not interrupt others.
- **Stand** when you speak and when the judge speaks to you.
- **Questions to Crown Counsel:** Ask these questions to the Judge. For example, if you want to know the name of the Crown witness ask, “Your Honour, could Crown Counsel tell me the name of this witness?” Do not talk directly to the Crown when the Judge is there.
- **Do not use slang** unless it is a direct quote from the evidence and necessary for your submission.

- ❑ **Do not make facial expressions or gestures.** This can be distracting and may give the judge a poor impression. Tell supporters not to do this.
- ❑ **Never give a document directly to a witness or the Judge.** Tell the person you want him or her to look at a document and pass it to the Court Clerk.
- ❑ **Do not argue with the Judge.** Once a Judge makes a decision do not try to re-argue or continue arguing.
- ❑ **If you do not understand a part of the proceeding then ask the Judge. He or she will explain the procedure and try to give you reasonable assistance.**

