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How to Behave When You Are Attending Court

The courtroom is one place where the dress code is still formal office.

Dress in a formal- office fashion, simple and not flashy. The whole idea is to dress neat, clean and presentable as a statement of respect to the Court.

Avoid blue jeans, track pants and shirts, sneakers, flip-flop shoes or street clothing if possible. However, if that pair of blue jeans is your best pair of pants, then wear them and try to present yourself as neatly as possible.

Men should wear suits with ties and jackets or just dress pants, a dress shirt and a tie, if possible. Women should dress formal office but again, nothing flashy or attention drawing.

Avoid beach clothes or comfy clothes such as shorts, short skirts, low-cut tops, bathing suits, halter-tops or belly shirts. These clothes may be the norm for your lifestyle but it does not show respect to the court.

Both men and women should avoid flashy, dangling jewelry. You are not in court to advertise or flaunt your riches, and it does not impress the judge if you do. However, it could be a distraction to others.

Avoid strong fragrances.

Avoid drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs before you come to court. Drug users and habitual drinkers are easy to spot, even days after consumption of use has abated.

If courthouse personnel have suspicions a party has been imbibing, judges can and will order drug or alcohol testing on the spot. A positive test could result in contempt sanctions, criminal prosecution or delay.

Stand when addressing the judge. Do not interrupt the judge or the attorneys. When asked a question, wait until the entire question has been asked, before attempting to answer. Thereafter answer the question asked, rather than the question you want to answer.

Whispering or carrying on a private conversation while the judge is speaking or when others are speaking is always a bad idea.

Smirking at witnesses, getting angry or showing animosity to others is not a good idea. Sometimes the appearance or demeanor of an accused is the tipping point when jurors must determine guilt or innocence. Or when a judge must rule between prison and probation.

All people who enter the courthouse are subject to search. Contraband or weapons will be confiscated and offenders prosecuted.

Do not bring beverages, gum, or food.

Cell phones must be turned off.

Although you are obligated to appear at your scheduled court time, don't necessarily expect to begin on time. Breaks in court proceedings are not always predictable. Once you enter a courtroom don't rule out the possibility you may be without liquid, sustenance or lavatory breaks for up to 3 hours.