



# COURT ETIQUETTE

The Essential Guide to Making a Great  
Impression at Your Court Appearance.

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ADVICE FROM LAWYERS ON

✓ what to wear

✓ how to behave

✓ how to talk to a judge



Knowing **what to wear to court**, **how to behave in court**, and **how to talk to a judge** are extremely important (yet often forgotten) elements in your court appearance.

Making a great impression in the courtroom and putting your best foot forward to the judge and jury can have a greater effect than you might realize.

To help you prepare for your court date, we've put together a comprehensive guide to help you look your best and act your best at your courtroom appearance.



PART I

## What to Wear



TIMEX

PART II

## How to Behave



PART III

## Addressing the Judge

A photograph of a grand, classical building entrance, likely a courthouse. The foreground is dominated by wide, light-colored marble steps that lead up to the entrance. Two large, fluted white columns stand prominently on either side of the central path. The building's facade is made of light-colored stone blocks. Small black signs with white text are visible on the walls near the entrances. The overall atmosphere is formal and majestic.

PART I

# WHAT TO WEAR TO COURT

# Dress for the occasion.

Whether you're going to be a witness, a juror, or a defendant, this is not the time and place to wear that new t-shirt that you bought at a concert.

Court is a serious place that requires serious dress. This is especially true if you're the defendant.

You need to know what to wear to court before appearing in front of people who will be judging you and determining the outcome of your case.

The *last* thing you want to do is make a bad impression.

Keep reading and we'll tell you exactly **what you should (or shouldn't) wear to court.**

# What Men Should (and Shouldn't) Wear to Court

## WEAR A SUIT AND TIE.

If you don't have a suit that fits, khakis or dress slacks with a ironed button down shirt and dress shoes will work. But wearing a suit is preferred, it's more professional and it'll show you're taking the process seriously.

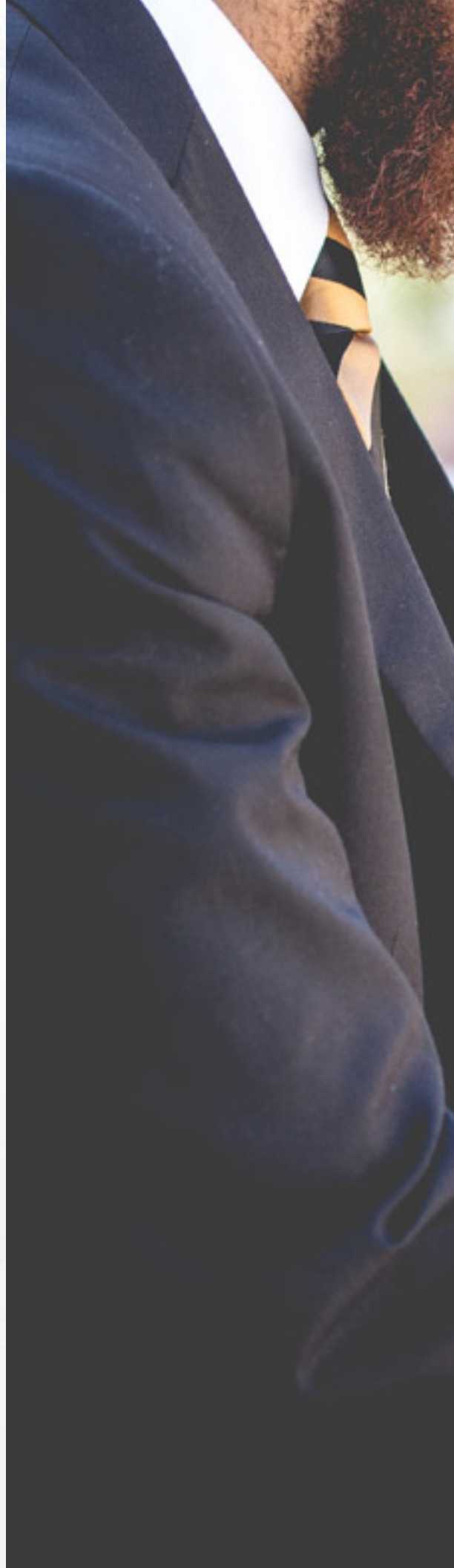
## WHAT MEN SHOULDN'T WEAR

Basically anything that could be considered casual, you should stay far away from. This isn't the park, your backyard or your friend's house party, this is court.

- No jeans
- No sneakers
- No sandals
- No work boots
- No t-shirts

It's also important to note that you shouldn't wear flashy jewelry and you should also wear clothing that covers up tattoos.

Some judges and jurors tend to have a negative perception of such styles and showings of self expression.





## BEST COLORS FOR MEN

When deciding on a suit to wear (remember, no jeans), **the darker the suit the better.**

Light colored suits (blue, light gray, tan, maroon, green, etc) are less formal and tend to be less accepted than darker options.

But don't go too dark. Black suits should also be avoided as well because they tend to connote power and superiority. These are not exactly the vibes you're trying to give off if you're the defendant, you want to be humble and serious, not in charge.

The absolute best color options for suits are **dark grey** and **navy blue.**

It's worth stopping by a second hand store and picking one up just for the occasion, even if you know you'll never use it again.



When it comes to your dress shirt stick to **blue or white.**

It's also preferable to wear a **dress shirt that has collar stays** because they're more formal than collars with buttons.

But a buttoned down collar will work in a pinch.



## The same rules apply to ties.

You'll want to wear one, of course, and you'll want to keep the colors simple.

## **Stick to blue or black.**

Keep it simple and conservative.

# What Women Should (and Shouldn't) Wear to Court

Ladies, your court date is not a first date.

Keep your clothes conservative and modest.

Dresses, pant suits, dress skirts with professional blouses work best, just remember to keep it on the traditional side.

## WHAT WOMEN SHOULDN'T WEAR

You're not going out on the town with your girlfriends, so leave the more fashionable outfits in your closet.

**Don't wear anything too tight, too short, or too revealing.**





## Keep makeup and jewelry to a minimum.

Flashy diamond earrings or that statement piece necklace might be a fitting look for a fancy dinner with your significant other, but in court not so much.

This is especially true if your case pertains in any way to finances.

If you're asking the court for money or to avoid having to pay money, you don't want them to look at you and think you clearly have enough.



## BEST COLORS FOR WOMEN

The number one rule for women is: Don't dress to distract.

Keep it simple. Similar to the color palette described for men, dark pants suits and dresses are preferred.

Try to stick to **dark grey** and **navy blue**.

Don't go for black as it gives the impression of power not humility.



## Don't wear anything bright or bold.

While staying so traditional and conservative might seem restrictive, it will make the judge take you seriously.

Remember, the courtroom is a serious place and it's vital that you respect it.



# Do's and Don'ts for Men and Women

## Jeans are a no go.

We get asked all the time; "Can I wear jeans to court?"

No, you can't wear jeans to court.

The judge and the jury most likely are not aware of the latest style trends, so even those skinny jeans with a blazer GQ told you to wear won't work.

Remember, there are no casual Fridays in the courthouse.



## **STAY AWAY FROM BOLD COLORS AND PATTERNS.**

Bold and beautiful colors are fun but being in front of a judge is not about fun, it's about justice, and justice is a very serious business.

A hearing is not the time to bust out the latest avant garde styles or your best Hawaiian shirt.

Instead, go with subdued hues.

Browns, greys, whites, and dark blues are best.

It's better to be cautious and conservative than take a risk when it comes to dressing for court, so stick with just solid colors to stay on the safe side.



## SUMMARY

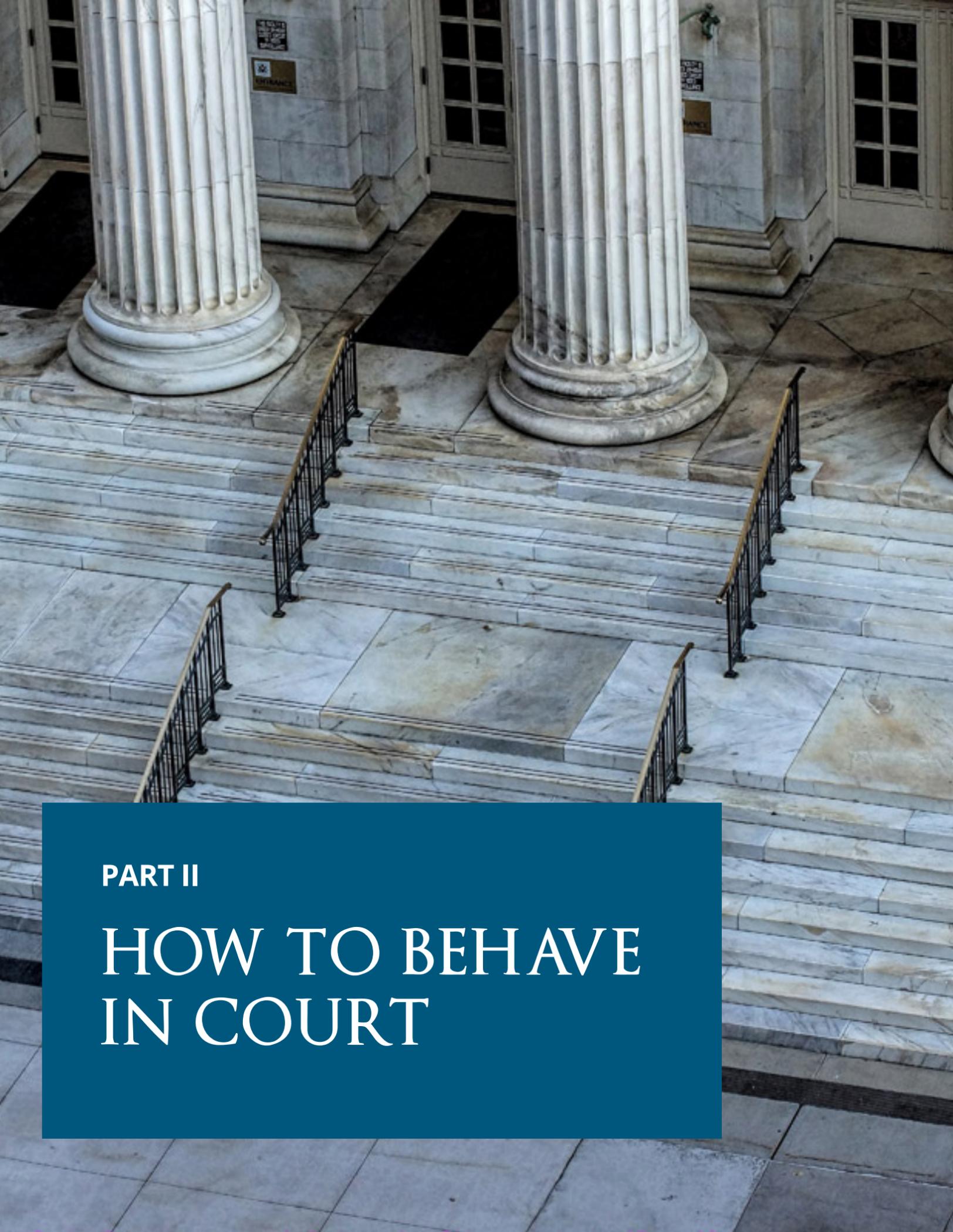
# What to Wear to Court

The way you dress should exude respect and dignity.

The courtroom is not the place for creativity in the way you dress and you don't want to bring attention to yourself.

If you're the defendant,  
remember that you want to  
show the judge and jury that  
you realize the gravity of the  
situation.

It's a cliché we've all heard, but it's especially true when  
it comes to court-dress for success.



**PART II**

**HOW TO BEHAVE  
IN COURT**



## Don't be late.

Being late in most circumstances isn't polite, being late on your court date can actually harm your case.

It shows that you aren't serious about the process and displays carelessness.

There's never really a good excuse for being late, you should aim to arrive early, but in the rare occurrence that there's an unavoidable obstacle, contact the judge's clerk and let them know your situation.

# Speak softly in the courtroom.

You don't want to make the judge angry by being disruptive while he's dealing with another case. So be quiet.

If your attorney asks you questions, answer them quietly or step outside if needed. It's also important to note that if you have to leave the courtroom, do so without making any loud noises and close the door gently behind you as you exit.

In general, it's a good idea to refrain from speaking while you're waiting.

# Mind your manners.

Be polite to everyone you come into contact with. From the clerk who checks you in to the court reporter, treat everyone with respect.

Judges are aware of how you conduct yourself around their staff, so be mindful of this when you're talking to anyone in the courtroom.

Take note that a lot of judges give a substantial amount of power to their clerks in terms of scheduling.

A clerk who likes you can make your life easier but a clerk who thinks you're rude can make your day more difficult.



## Keep your emotions in check.

Stay collected and do your best to not wear your emotions on your sleeve.

Don't be smug. Don't get angry. Even if you don't say anything, judges notice your body language. If you're frowning or smirking the judge will notice.

Remember you're trying to make a good impression, so act accordingly.

This doesn't mean you have to be a suck-up, you don't want to be over the top and inauthentic, but it does mean showing respect to everyone in the room.



PART III

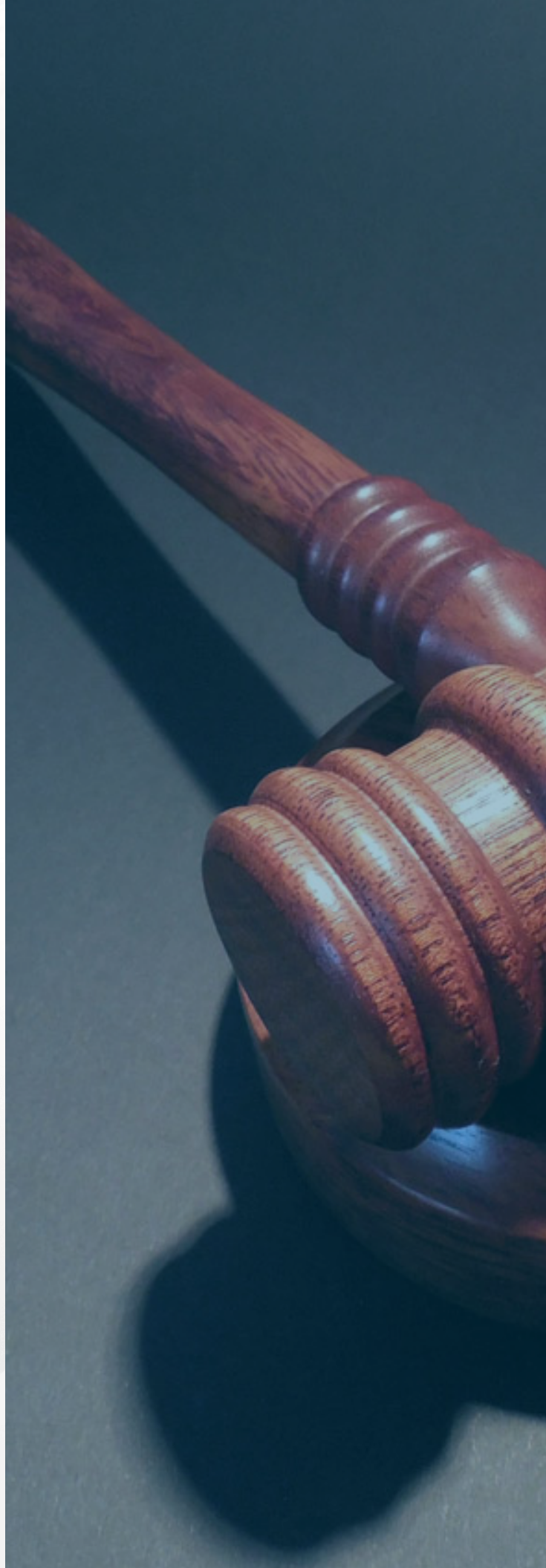
# HOW TO TALK TO A JUDGE

# Respecting the judge is paramount.

The judge is responsible for the outcome of your trial and showing that you're sincere about the entire process can really give your case an advantage.

If you don't show reverence it will most likely hurt your case, but knowing how to interact with your judge could actually help it.

In any case, learning what's appropriate in the courtroom setting definitely won't do you any harm and it's easy to do.





## **ALL RISE.**

“All Rise” means ‘stand up’ when the judge walks in

Stand up when the judge enters the courtroom and stay standing until he is seated.

When the judge stands to leave, you should stand as well. If you’re not sure whether to sit or stand, follow what everyone else in the room is doing.

While not directly a tip on speaking to a judge, it’s an important rule to follow and is the very first thing the judge will notice.

## **NEVER INTERRUPT THE JUDGE.**

There is never a case where you should ever cut a judge off from speaking.

Even if you completely disagree with what’s being said, bite your tongue if you have to and wait until the judge is finished.

## **SPEAK CLEARLY AND DIRECTLY.**

Don’t ramble on. Don’t try to be funny. Don’t curse.

It’s ok to pause and think before you speak. It’s better to gather your thoughts than to stutter all over yourself.

## **KEEP IT SHORT.**

When telling your story to the judge or answering any of his questions, be brief. This is not the time to go into every little detail, all you need is a summary.

For example, you don't need to tell the judge that you ate four eggs, five slices of bacon, and two slices of toast for breakfast. You can simply state that you ate breakfast.

## **ALWAYS ADDRESS THE JUDGE PROPERLY.**

When answering the judge's questions, always refer to the judge as "Your honor".

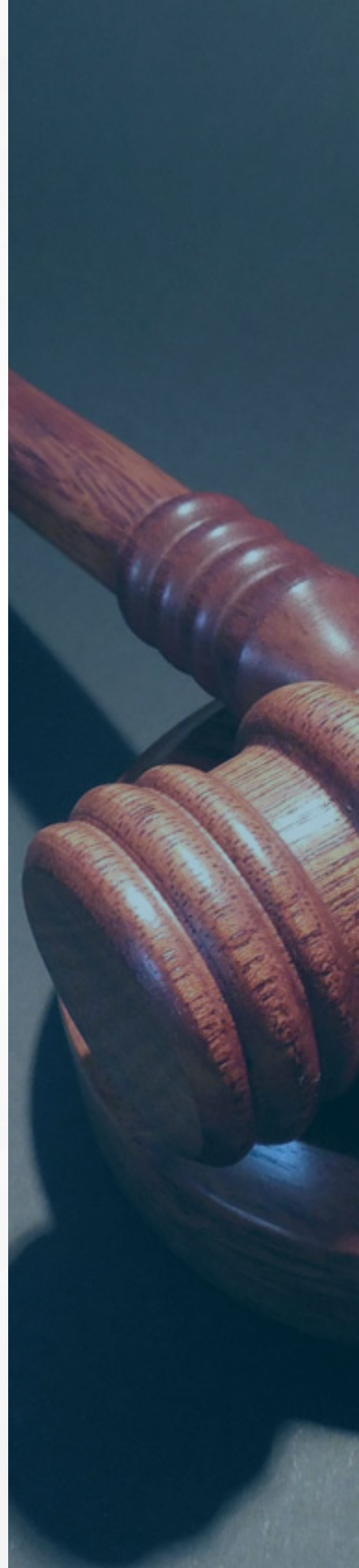
The judge is not your friend or acquaintance, he is your superior in this situation and should be shown deference. Don't make a scene if things don't go your way.

If the ruling isn't in your favor, don't get upset and throw a temper tantrum. You still have a chance to appeal or seek a retrial. Blowing up at the judge could destroy any chance of obtaining the ruling you want.

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