

How to Help Yourself in Small Claims Court

1. **Bring your witnesses with you.** If someone knows something about your case and you want them to talk to the court about it, they have to be here for trial. The court will issue subpoenas for you to serve on witnesses who are reluctant to come voluntarily; see the clerk's office.
2. If you are the Defendant and you want to speak in court to defend yourself, **you MUST file a written Answer with the court before trial.** Your answer must assert your defenses and any counter claims you want to bring against the other side. (If you are going to file your Answer on the morning of trial, please come to the court clerk's office early and do that BEFORE court is scheduled to start.) Send or give a copy of your Answer to the Plaintiff.
3. **Bring all of your paperwork with you.** This includes all documents and photographs that you are going to ask the court to review. Make enough copies so that you can give them to every person on the other side and keep a copy for yourself, as well. The court will keep the originals if they are admitted in to evidence. The magistrate will decide what documents or things are admitted into evidence; just because you have a document does not automatically mean it will be admitted.
 - a. If you are asking for money as a part of your judgment, you must prove exactly how much money is owed to you. Bring leases, contracts, promissory notes (the original is required), insufficient funds checks (the original is required), bills, invoices, receipts and cancelled checks.
4. You can try to settle your case before coming to court. If you succeed in doing that, please let the court know (preferably in a written statement signed by both sides) that you have settled the case. Statements and concessions made during settlement negotiations are not admissible at trial if you can not settle your case. Please know that, even if you try to settle the case and are not successful before you come to court, the magistrate will probably make you talk to the other side again, in an attempt to settle your differences yourselves, before you can start a trial.
5. Please call the court in advance of the trial if you are bringing any digital media (DVDs or CDs), videotapes, or other unusual evidence to the trial.
6. Make notes about what you want to say. You do not have to memorize everything. You can refer to your notes, or even provide the magistrate with a written summary of your case. The more organized you are, the easier it is to present your case.
7. More information is available on-line at www.courts.state.co.us. Click on the Self-Help Center link and go to Small Claims.