



Guidelines for Witnesses

1. **Always tell the truth.** Testify as accurately as you can about the facts
2. **Never guess. If you don't know something, say so. "I don't know"** is a perfect answer if you do not know the answer to any question you are asked. Be especially careful about questions involving distances and times. If you don't know, say so. If you are estimating, say so.
3. **Take your time. Give every question some thought. Be sure you understand the question before you answer it.** If you don't understand a question, ask the attorney to repeat or clarify it.
4. Pause briefly before answering questions. This allows the attorney enough time to object to any question that is improper. If an objection is made, do not answer the question until the judge has ruled on the objection. If you have forgotten the question in the meantime, ask the attorney to repeat it.
5. **Answer only the question asked. Do not volunteer information.**
6. Speak up. Talk loudly enough so that everyone will hear you. Do not nod your head; say yes or no.
7. Do not look at the attorney for help. Once you are on the stand, you are on your own. You know the information better than anyone else, though. Neither the attorney or the judge can help you, and if you look like you want someone else to tell you the answer, it may create a bad impression.
8. **Do not lose your temper.** It may seem at times that the opposing attorney is trying to pin you down. Remember, that is part of that attorney's job, and s/he has the right to test your memory and knowledge of the facts. Do not argue with or give evasive or flippant answers to the opposing attorney. This type of behavior creates a bad impression and may even lose the case.
9. Be courteous and do not make jokes or wisecracks. A trial is a serious matter. Being polite is one of the best and easiest ways to create a good impression. **The judge should be addressed as "Your Honor".**
10. Be alert. Bright crisp answers leave the best impression.
11. There is often a significant amount of waiting time in court. It is recommended that you bring something to read or do while you wait.