



Preparing for Court Checklist

Revitalized Reintegration Services
The L.E.A.RN Hub



revitalized.ca



289-302-4094



hub@revitalized.ca

@Revitalized Reintegration
Services



@Revitalized Reintegration
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Getting Started

About The L.E.A.RN Hub

The L.E.A.RN (Legal Education and Reintegration) Hub is an **online database** that provides **accessible, holistic information** about how to navigate the criminal justice system in Ontario, with a focus on providing **BIPOC-centered resources**.

The goals of The L.E.A.RN Hub are to:

- To help increase community members' understanding of navigating through the criminal legal system.
- To reduce feelings of uncertainty amongst low-income community members that navigate the criminal legal system.
- To increase low-income community members access to information about the criminal legal system.
- To increase feelings of resiliency and confidence navigating the criminal legal system amongst course participants.
- To provide a user-friendly experience where community members can feel at ease accessing information.



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How to use this checklist

There are three sections in this checklist: **what to bring to court**, **how to talk to the judge**, and **things to keep in mind**.

Below is a list of things you can do to get the most of this checklist:

1. Review your checklist items several times before your court appearance.
2. When planning what to bring to court, put the items you will be bringing to court in a bag or folder that you can bring with you to court. Do this the day or night before your court appearance.
3. Use this checklist to plan out what you will wear to court the night before your court appearance.

Please reference bolded words in this checklist with words in our Legal Term Glossary.



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How to use this checklist

Please note that this glossary is **not intended** to replace sound legal counsel. Please contact [Revitalized Reintegration Services](#) to be referred to a lawyer for further legal support, if needed.



What to bring to court

- A pen and notepad to take notes during the trial.
- The originals and at least one copy of any documents that are relevant to your case. Examples include cheques, contracts, printed photos, or tickets.
- Any materials you received from the **Crown**.
- Copies of the **court notice** that tells you when your trial starts, and what courtroom your case will be in.
- Photo identification (e.g., drivers license, health card, etc.)



What to bring to court

- Anytime the judge calls your name, stand up and say “Yes, your honor”.
- Always speak loudly and clearly when you are talking to the judge so that they can hear you.
- Look at the **judge** when they are speaking.
- If you are asked a “yes” or “no” question, answer verbally. Don’t just nod your head.



Things to keep in mind

- ❑ **Dress to impress:** The judge and/or jury may view your personal appearance to judge whether or not you understand that your hearing is a formal affair. Below is a list of clothing you may want to consider when deciding what to wear to court:
 - Appropriate clothes for court include shirts with a collar and tie (preferably no slogans, words, pictures, or decals),
 - Pants (preferably not jeans)
 - Dress or skirt that is not too short or too tight
 - Shoes that are not sneakers

- ❑ **Arrive early:** Make sure that you arrive at the courthouse at least 15 minutes before your trial time. Being early shows that you take your case seriously, and this gives you extra time to arrive in case of emergencies. Plan your route out the day before your trial to make sure that you arrive early.



Things to keep in mind

- ❑ **Do not bring banned items to the courthouse:** Below is a list of items that you should not bring with you to the courthouse:
 - Weapons, including pocket knives
 - Drugs or alcohol
 - Cigarettes (if you are under 18)
 - Cigarette lighters, as they may be taken at security.
 - Food and drinks will not be allowed in the courtroom

- ❑ **Make sure your cellphone is on silent:** “If you bring your cell phone to court, make sure it is on silent or turned off. Vibrate is not recommended since it is distracting to the court. If your phone rings in the courtroom, court security may take your phone for the remainder of the day.” (Kids Legal, n.d.)



Things to keep in mind

- ❑ **Information:** The formal document outlining your criminal offense(s) is known as the “Information”. You can acquire or view the “Information” by contacting the court office.
- ❑ **Essential elements of the offense:** A conviction can only be reached if the Crown proves each essential element of the charge(s) against you. The Information should contain these details. You may ask the judge before the trial starts to review the essential elements so that you can understand what the Crown must prove.
- ❑ **Presumption of innocence, reasonable doubt, and burden of proof:** You cannot be convicted unless each essential element of the charge(s) against you is **beyond a reasonable doubt**. “Reasonable Doubt” does require a certain standard of proof that does not need absolute certainty but must be beyond the standard of proof in civil cases.



References

- Ontario Court of Justice. (2012) *Guide for Accused Persons in Criminal Trials*. Retrieved from <https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/self-represented-parties/guide-for-accused-in-criminal-cases/guide/>
- Kids Legal. (n.d.) *What should I expect in court?* Retrieved from <https://kidslegal.org/what-should-i-expect-court>



Notes

