

EVIDEXI

FREE PLAYBOOK

Court Prep Without Losing Your Mind

Walk in prepared. Walk out confident.

What to bring, what to wear, how to address the judge, evidence organization, and the mistakes that lose cases. Your hearing prep companion.

12 PAGES · PDF · FREE

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Document. Organize. Prepare for court.

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Who This Playbook Is For

Parents with a hearing coming up who feel unprepared, overwhelmed, or terrified. This walks you through it like a friend who has been there.

What to Wear (And What Not To)

What you wear to court sends a message before you say a single word. The goal is to look like the responsible, put-together parent you are.

Do Wear:

- Business casual at minimum: slacks or a modest skirt, collared shirt or blouse
- Dark, neutral colors: navy, charcoal, dark green
- Clean, pressed clothes that fit well
- Minimal, professional jewelry
- Closed-toe shoes

Do Not Wear:

- Jeans, shorts, or athletic wear
- Anything revealing, flashy, or distracting
- Heavy perfume or cologne
- Sunglasses on your head
- Anything with logos, slogans, or graphics

PRO TIP

Think "job interview at a bank." You want the judge focused on your words, not your outfit. When in doubt, overdress.

Why It Matters

Judges are human. They form impressions. A parent who shows up looking professional signals that they take the proceedings seriously. It is not about money. A clean, pressed outfit from a thrift store works perfectly.

What to Bring: The Complete Checklist

Being prepared is half the battle. Here is everything you should have with you.

Essential Documents:

- Photo ID
- Court notice or summons with case number
- Copy of current custody order or parenting plan
- Any filed motions and responses
- Your evidence binder (organized, see Chapter 4)

Personal Items:

- Notepad and pen (for notes during the hearing)
- Water bottle (courtrooms can be hot and stressful)
- Snack in your bag (hearings get delayed regularly)
- Phone on silent (not vibrate, silent)
- Tissues (no shame in needing them)

Do NOT Bring:

- Your children (unless specifically instructed)
- Weapons of any kind
- New evidence you have not shared with the other side
- Family members who might cause a scene

PRO TIP

Arrive 30 minutes early. Find the courtroom. Use the restroom. Sit quietly and review your notes. Being early removes one layer of stress from an already stressful day.

How to Address the Judge and Court Staff

Courtroom etiquette matters more than you think. Judges notice everything.

The Basics:

- Address the judge as "Your Honor", always
- Stand when the judge enters and exits
- Stand when speaking unless told otherwise
- Do not interrupt anyone. Wait your turn.
- Say "Yes, Your Honor" and "No, Your Honor" not "yeah" or "nah"

Court Staff:

- Be polite to everyone: clerks, bailiffs, opposing counsel
- They talk to the judge. Their impression of you matters.
- A simple "good morning" and "thank you" go a long way

Body Language:

- Sit up straight. Hands folded or on the table.
- Do not roll your eyes, sigh, shake your head, or react visibly when the other side speaks
- Do not whisper to your attorney while the judge or other party is speaking
- Make eye contact with the judge when you speak

PRO TIP

The judge is watching you even when you are not the one talking. Treat every moment in that courtroom as if you are being evaluated, because you are.

Organizing Your Evidence Binder

A well-organized evidence binder shows the court you are prepared, credible, and thorough.

Structure:

- Tab 1: Case summary, one page, bullet points, key facts
- Tab 2: Current orders and agreements
- Tab 3: Timeline of key events
- Tab 4: Communication evidence (texts, emails), chronological
- Tab 5: Documentation of incidents, chronological
- Tab 6: Financial documents (if relevant)
- Tab 7: Third-party evidence (school records, medical records, police reports)

Formatting Tips:

- Print everything. Do not rely on your phone.
- Label each page with dates
- Highlight key passages (but do not over-highlight)
- Include a table of contents on the first page
- Make three copies: one for you, one for the judge, one for opposing counsel

PRO TIP

A judge who can quickly find the information they need in your binder is a judge who takes you seriously. Organization is credibility.

What to Exclude:

- Irrelevant personal grievances
- Evidence obtained illegally
- Anything you have not disclosed to the other side per court rules

The 5 Mistakes That Lose Custody Cases

These mistakes are common, preventable, and devastating. Do not make them.

1. Badmouthing the Other Parent

Not in texts. Not on social media. Not in front of the kids. Not to their teacher. Courts want both parents involved. Badmouthing makes YOU look like the problem.

2. Violating Court Orders

Even small violations. Even ones you think are justified. If the order says pick-up at 6pm, you are there at 6pm. If you disagree with the order, file a motion. Do not just ignore it.

3. Losing Your Temper in Writing

That angry text you sent at 2am? It will be Exhibit A. Every written communication is potential evidence. Use BIFF. Use the 24-hour rule. Vent to your therapist, not your co-parent.

4. Not Documenting

If it is not documented, it did not happen. Verbal agreements mean nothing. Patterns you did not record cannot be proven. Start documenting today.

5. Putting the Kids in the Middle

Do not ask your children to carry messages. Do not quiz them about the other parent's household. Do not make them choose sides. Judges watch for this, and it will destroy your case.

PRO TIP

Every one of these mistakes is driven by emotion. That is why strategy beats feelings in custody situations. You can feel everything, just do not act on it without thinking.

What to Expect at Your First Hearing

Walking into a courtroom for the first time is intimidating. Knowing what to expect removes some of that fear.

Before You Are Called:

You will likely wait. Sometimes hours. The courtroom handles multiple cases. Bring something to occupy your mind. Do not pace or look anxious.

When Your Case Is Called:

- You will be asked to approach or stand
- The judge may ask questions directly or let attorneys speak first
- Keep your answers brief and factual
- Do not volunteer information not asked for
- If you do not understand a question, say "Could you please rephrase that, Your Honor?"

The Reality:

- Your hearing may be shorter than expected (15-30 minutes is common for initial hearings)
- The judge may not make a decision that day
- You may not get to present all your evidence
- The outcome may be a temporary order, not a final one

PRO TIP

Manage your expectations. One hearing rarely decides everything. This is a marathon, not a sprint. Focus on making the best impression possible each time.

Handling Surprises and False Allegations

Sometimes the other side brings something unexpected. False allegations. Surprise witnesses. New claims. Here is how to handle it.

Stay Calm

Your reaction in the courtroom matters more than the allegation itself. If you look panicked, angry, or guilty, the judge notices. Breathe. Stay composed. Your attorney (or you, if self-represented) will have a chance to respond.

Do Not React Visibly

- No gasping, eye-rolling, head-shaking, or outbursts
- Write down your response on your notepad
- Wait for your turn to speak

How to Respond to False Allegations:

- State the facts calmly: "That is not accurate. Here is what happened..."
- Reference your documentation if you have it
- Do not attack the other parent's character, just correct the record
- If you need time to gather evidence to counter a claim, ask for it

PRO TIP

False allegations are common in high-conflict cases. Judges have seen them before. A calm, documented response is always more powerful than an emotional denial.

After the Hearing: What Happens Next

The hearing is over. Now what?

Immediately After:

- Write down everything you remember: what the judge said, what was ordered, any deadlines
- If you have an attorney, confirm the outcome and next steps
- Do not discuss the hearing in front of your children
- Do not post about it on social media

If You Got a Favorable Outcome:

- Do not gloat. Do not tell the kids "I won." Just follow the new orders.
- Document compliance with the new orders immediately
- Keep doing what you have been doing

If the Outcome Was Not What You Hoped:

- This is one battle, not the war. Most cases involve multiple hearings.
- Talk to your attorney about next steps and appeal options
- Continue documenting. Build your case for the next hearing.
- Take care of yourself. Process the emotions with your support system.

PRO TIP

Regardless of the outcome, your job stays the same: be the stable parent. Document everything. Follow every order. Prepare for the next step.

The court process is slow and imperfect. But consistency wins over time. Every hearing is an opportunity to demonstrate that you are the parent who follows rules, stays calm, and puts the children first.

EVIDEXI

This playbook teaches the framework.

The app helps you do it daily.

Evidexi helps you document, organize, and prepare for court, all in one place.

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- Log incidents with timestamps and details
- Organize evidence by category and date
- Track custody schedule and violations
- Generate court-ready reports
- Keep everything secure and private

Free to start. No credit card required.

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