



Welcome to the  
Probate and Family Court  
Department of the  
Massachusetts Trial Court.

Many Probate and  
Family Law matters  
involve complex and  
valuable legal rights.

You should always speak with an  
attorney before filing any papers.  
Please ask court staff for “Looking  
For Legal Assistance?”, a list of  
local lawyer referral services and  
legal aid agencies.

# BEFORE GOING INTO COURT....

This booklet  
contains ten helpful tips  
about how to conduct yourself in  
court. Please read them carefully  
before entering the courtroom.

This pamphlet is provided  
as a service of the court and does  
not constitute legal advice  
which can only be given to you by  
an attorney.

1. DRESS IN A WAY THAT SHOWS RESPECT FOR THE COURT	You do not have to buy new clothes for court but halters, worn out jeans and tee-shirts are not appropriate. Don't chew gum, eat or drink in the courtroom.
2. BE ON TIME	If you miss your hearing, the judge can make orders that you may not agree with and which may seriously affect you and your children.
3. DO NOT BRING CHILDREN INTO COURT	Many of the topics discussed in court are not appropriate for young children. Please arrange for a friend or relative to watch your children while you are in court.
4. STAND WHEN THE JUDGE ENTERS OR LEAVES THE COURTROOM	The court officer will tell you when to sit and stand. If you are in doubt, stand when the judge is standing. You can usually sit down once the judge is seated, unless you are speaking with the judge.
5. STAND AND SPEAK WHEN THE JUDGE TALKS TO YOU	Remain standing as long as you and the judge are talking. You may need to stay standing even if the judge talks to the person on the other side of your case. If in doubt, ask the judge before sitting down.
6. THE JUDGE WILL LET YOU KNOW WHEN TO SPEAK	Never get into an argument or even a discussion with the other side in front of the judge. Always speak directly to the judge, unless the judge allows you to answer formal questions from the other side.
7. SPEAK CLEARLY	You need to speak and not just nod or shake your head because court proceedings are always recorded. Listen carefully to the questions you are asked. Be direct and to the point when answering questions.
8. ALWAYS ADDRESS THE JUDGE AS "YOUR HONOR"	The judge must keep order in the courtroom and will be making important decisions about you and your children. Be respectful and understand that the judge likes to keep the proceedings as orderly as possible. This helps keep the process fair to everyone.
9. YOUR CASE MAY BE "TAKEN UNDER ADVISEMENT"	This means that the judge needs time to think about how to decide your case and the court will mail the decision to you once it is made. Make sure that the court has your current mailing address.
10. DO NOT TALK ON YOUR WAY OUT OR EVEN RIGHT OUTSIDE THE DOOR	Many times another hearing starts as soon as yours ends. Your talking can interfere with the next case.

\*These Guidelines and All Court Rules Apply to Attorneys. \*

\*You Must Follow Them as Well. \*