

OGLE COUNTY COURT ROOM REQUIREMENTS

(ATTORNEYS, SELF REPRESENTED LITIGANTS, PARTIES AND WITNESSES)

1. **DRESS APPROPRIATELY.** Please dress as if you are going to an important function. Male attorneys must wear a tie and suit jacket. Female attorneys must wear business attire. Non-attorneys are not to wear tee shirts with inappropriate slogans or pictures, hats or clothes that are too revealing. Coats must be removed before approaching the bench/judge.
2. **BE TIMELY.** You need to be on time. If your case is called and you are not present, Orders that are against your interest may be entered in your absence. Even if your case is not the only case on the call, be sure to be prompt. If you are late, do not call the Circuit Clerk's office after the call has already started as it cannot be assumed that the Circuit Clerk can get a message to the Judge. Instead, call your opponent and let your opponent know how late you will be and whether the opponent is willing to continue the case or wait for you to arrive.
3. **BRING COPIES OF YOUR PERTINENT PLEADINGS.** While the Court has access to the Circuit Clerk docket, the Court call does not always provide sufficient time for the Judge to determine why you are appearing in Court. If you have recently filed a Motion, it may not be on the Circuit Clerk docket by the time the Judge takes the bench. Non-attorneys are held to the same standard as attorneys. Therefore, make sure your pleadings meet the legal requirements provided in the Illinois Supreme Court Rules or the applicable Illinois Code of Procedure (civil/criminal). There are self-help materials available in the Circuit Clerk's Office.
4. **BE COURTEOUS AND RESPECTFUL.** This applies to the Judges, Court staff and your opponent, whether it is an attorney or a self-represented litigant. This also applies not only in the Courtroom, but also at all other places in the Courthouse. It is understood that the parties and litigants may not agree on the facts or law applicable to the case. However, civility to all encountered in the courthouse is EXPECTED. A court participant is subject to the contempt powers of the Court, including incarceration, even when the conduct does not occur directly in the Courtroom.
5. **BE PREPARED AND CONCISE.** Being prepared means understanding what your case is about, its status, and the rules of the courtroom. In other words, know ahead of time what the Court expects from you and needs to address on each hearing date and be prepared to participate. A court functions on evidence and proof. If your case is set for hearing, be sure to bring all of your exhibits that you intend to use, as well as any witnesses that you deem necessary. You should bring multiple copies of your exhibits so you can give the original to the Judge and have a copy for yourself and your opponent. To the extent practicable, these exhibits should be properly numbered. Also, be prepared to present your case when called upon to do so. If an objection is made during the time you are presenting your testimony or other evidence, pause to give the Court time to make a ruling on whether the testimony or other evidence is admissible.

6. **PRESENT YOUR EVIDENCE AND TESTIMONY TO THE COURT.** When you are in front of the judge, you should speak directly to the judge and not the other party or the other party's attorney. The judge will allow both sides to make arguments. Do not interrupt the opposing party or opposing attorney while they are speaking to the judge. Unruly behavior in Court can lead to a contempt finding and potential incarceration. The parties, not the Court, are responsible for subpoenaing witnesses and records. There are limits as to what evidence is admissible in Court and the parties are responsible for knowing these rules of evidence whether they are represented by an attorney or are self-represented.

7. **REVIEW COURT ORDERS.** Every time you are in Court, you need to review the Court Order that is written and make sure that the Order accurately reflects what happened in Court and what is going to happen next. This should be done in the Courtroom before leaving if the Order is being prepared at that time, or via email should it be prepared after the Court proceeding and is to be submitted through the e-filing system to the Circuit Clerk. If you have a disagreement as to whether the Order accurately reflects what occurred in Court, you should try to work out the disagreement with the opposing party or his/her attorney. If you cannot resolve the matter, you will need to file a Motion for Clarification or present the disagreement to the Judge at a time when both parties can be present. The Order that is submitted by the parties must be easily legible.

8. **COMMUNICATION WITH THE JUDGE.** Parties may not communicate about a case with the judge outside of formal court proceedings. This is most often done by filing Motions or other pleadings with the Circuit Clerk and providing the opponent or the opponent's attorney a copy of the Motion or pleadings. In the event that a judge provides an email address for purposes of providing documents to the Court, the opponent and/or the opponent's attorney must be copied on each and every email used to communicate with the judge.

9. **COMMUNICATION WITH OPPOSING ATTORNEYS.** Often times, one side of a matter will be represented by an attorney and the other will not. If you find yourself in a case where the other party has an attorney and you do not, you must remember that that attorney does not work for you and is in fact obligated to act only in the best interest of their client. You should not expect them to prepare pleadings for you, respond to your correspondence if they are disrespectful, or tell you what you should do for your side of the case. If you are an attorney, please refer to number 4. above, as at all times, respectful communication between counsel will be expected in the courthouse and otherwise. Attorneys working with *pro se* litigants are expected to follow the same rules.

10. **USE OF STANDARDIZED FORMS.** The Illinois Supreme Court has developed a number of standardized forms. All litigants, whether attorneys or self-represented litigants, are encouraged to review the Illinois Supreme Court website and utilize these standardized forms whenever available. If someone is having difficulty accessing these standardized forms, please contact the Circuit Clerk's office for assistance.

11. **USE OF ZOOM.** The Ogle County judges follow Illinois Supreme Court Rule 45 that governs use of zoom. All litigants are expected to know Rule 45 and what cases allow zoom under what situations. Remember, the same rules apply when appearing on a case via zoom, as if you were appearing in person. Being prepared means having copies of documents that are relevant to your case nearby and ready to access or display by sharing your screen on zoom. Some proceedings may also require you to send copies of the documents to the Court and other party before a court hearing commences.