

Be prepared.

- Bring documents that support your case (police or medical reports, rental agreements or receipts, pictures, bills, etc.).
- You can bring a witness to help support your case. Witnesses may or may not be permitted to testify. But you can bring a written statement of what the witness saw or heard. (You must file and serve witness statements by mail or in person, along with your *Answer* (Form DV-120). Bring filed copies of your *Answer* and *Proof of Service* [Form DV-250] to your hearing.)
- Most courtrooms do not allow children. Ask the court clerk if there is a children's waiting room in the courthouse.
- **Don't miss the hearing! If you miss it, the judge can make the orders without hearing from you.**

Get there 30 minutes early.

- Find the courtroom.
- When the courtroom opens, go in and tell the clerk or officer that you are present.
- If the person who asked for the order is present, do not sit near or talk to him or her.
- Watch the other cases so you will know what to do.
- When your name is called, go to the front of the courtroom.
- Your hearing may last just a few minutes or up to an hour or more. However, you may be at court several hours, depending on the number of other cases.

What if I don't speak English?

Ask someone who speaks English to call the court clerk before your hearing and ask for a court interpreter. If the interpreter is not available, bring someone to interpret for you. Do not ask a child, a witness, or a protected person to interpret for you.

What if I am deaf or hard of hearing?



Requests for Accommodations

Assistive listening systems, computer-assisted real-time captioning, or sign language interpreter services are available if you ask at least five days before the proceeding. Contact the clerk's office or go to www.courtinfo.ca.gov/forms for *Request for Accommodations by Persons With Disabilities and Order* (Form MC-410). (Civil Code, § 54.8.)

Practice telling what you disagree with.

Make a list of the orders you disagree with. Practice saying why you disagree. Do not take more than 3 minutes to say which orders you disagree with.

If you get nervous at the hearing, just read from your list. Use your list to make sure you have told the judge about each order you disagree with.



The judge may ask questions.

- Tell the truth. Speak slowly. You can read from your list.
- The other person or a lawyer may also ask you questions.
- Give complete answers.
- If you don't understand, say "I don't understand the question."
- If the other person lies in court, wait until he or she finishes talking. Then tell the judge.
- Speak only to the judge. Do not talk to the other person unless it is your turn to ask questions.
- When people are talking to the judge, wait for them to finish. Then you can ask them questions about what they said.
- Do not sit near or talk to the other person.

The judge will decide.

- At the end of the hearing, the judge will say what the orders are.
- You will be served with the *Restraining Order After Hearing* (Form DV-130) within a few days, by mail or in person.
- If anything on the Form DV-130 is different from what the judge ordered, talk to a lawyer right away. Or ask the court clerk how to find free or low-cost legal services.

The judge may "continue" your case.

This means you have to come back another day. The judge can do this if:

- You need more time to get a lawyer or prepare an answer
- The judge wants more information
- Your hearing is taking longer than planned

If your case is continued . . .

- The judge may make the orders last until the new hearing date.
- Bring all your papers back to court at the next hearing.

What about child custody or visitation?

- If you need child custody or visitation orders, the judge will send you to mediation. Mediation helps parents agree on a plan for custody and visitation that is best for the children.
- If you are sent to mediation, the judge may make your temporary custody and visitation orders last until the next hearing or until another court order.
- Either parent can ask to meet with the mediator separately.

What happens after the hearing?

- If the judge makes the orders, you must obey them. If you don't, you can be arrested.
- If you do not receive a copy of the orders, ask the clerk for a copy, or talk to a lawyer.