



INFORMATION FOR PRO-SE LITIGANTS

1. As a *pro se* litigant, you are acting as your own attorney. You are expected to know and follow the law and Court rules just as any attorney would, including the Texas Rules of Evidence, Texas Rules of Civil/Criminal Procedure, Lamb County Local Rules, and the Lawyer's Creed. If you fail to follow rules applicable to your case, you are subject to the same consequences as attorneys. Your case can be outright dismissed, you can be fined, you may have to pay the other person's attorney, or you can be found in contempt of court.
2. The Judge, court staff (including the court coordinator, court clerk, court reporter, and bailiff), and opposing counsel are not allowed to give you legal advice.
3. Do not attempt to communicate privately with the Judge. "Communication" includes contact by means of phone calls, letters, voicemail messages, faxes, e-mail messages, and direct conversations. You may only communicate with the judge if *all* parties and their attorneys (if they are represented) are present. One-on-one contact is called "*ex parte*" communication, and the judge will not consider it for any purpose. If you send written *ex parte* communication to the Court, it will be provided to all parties filed in the case. The Judge will not read *ex parte* communication. Permissible communications include formal pleadings, motions, and requests for relief filed with the Clerk.
4. It is your responsibility to provide the Court with a current and reliable mailing address and telephone number. Once you file your pleadings in the case, the Clerk will notify you by mail of hearings and/or motions. If you move, you must provide your new address and telephone number to the Clerk and the Court. If you move and you do not get your mail, you may permanently lose important rights.
5. Your requests to the Court should be made in a written motion. Any document you file with the Clerk's Office must comply with the following rules:
 - a. Print only on one side of the page; the paper on which your document is printed should be 8.5" x 11", and plain white. The document should have 1" margins.
 - b. The front cover page should contain the following:
 - i. Style of the Case (Petitioner/State vs. Respondent/Defendant);
 - ii. Case Number (if one has been assigned. If not, leave blank);
 - iii. Name of the Trial Court ("154th District Court of Lamb County, Texas");
 - iv. Title of the Document (i.e., "Motion for Continuance," "Defendant's Answer," "Motion to Compel," "Expert Witness List").
 - c. Your document must be signed and include your following information:
 - i. Name
 - ii. Mailing Address
 - iii. Telephone and Fax Number(s)
 - iv. Email Address



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6. You must send a copy of every pleading you file with the Court to the opposing attorney, or party (if they do not have an attorney).
7. It is your responsibility to request a hearing if none has been set by the Court. If you have received notice that a hearing has been scheduled, you must be prepared to present your evidence and witnesses.
8. **How to Get Ready for Court** – You can go to court yourself and watch other cases before yours is scheduled. If you do this, you will see how the court works, where everyone sits and what they do and say. Plan to do this a few days or weeks before you have to go to court.
9. **The Hearing** - At the hearing, the judge will hear your case. Depending on the type of hearing, each party will have a chance to tell his or her side of the story. It is important to bring your paperwork and your evidence such as photos, witnesses, bills, receipts, contracts, or anything else that will prove your case.
10. **How to Dress** - Dress as though you were going to an important job interview. Be neat and clean. Do not wear shorts, flip-flops, tank tops, halter tops, sandals, hats, or other casual clothing. The Court will order you removed from the courtroom if you are dressed inappropriately; this may result in a default of your civil case.
11. **Timeliness** - Always get to court on time. A good rule of thumb is to arrive at least thirty minutes early in order to allow for time to locate parking, clear the security check and locate the courtroom.
12. **Courtroom Demeanor** -You and your witnesses should be quiet in court.
 - Do not smoke or chew gum.
 - Cell phones and recording devices are prohibited in the courtroom, and no recording or photography of any kind is allowed.
 - Do not go in and out of the courtroom while waiting for your case to be called.
 - Do not bring children to court unless they have been subpoenaed.
 - During your case speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard, and stay calm.
 - Stand when speaking to the judge.
 - Call the judge "*Your Honor*."
 - Do not interrupt the judge, the attorneys or any other party in the courtroom.
 - At all times you should retain a composed and attentive posture whether you are in the audience, appearing as a witness, or appearing as a party.
 - It is never proper to speak, even in a whisper, with friends or other audience members while court is in session.
13. Violations of any of the above rules may result in sanctions being granted against you.