

This webpage is for informational purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as legal advice. For specific legal advice, consult with an attorney.

Every effort has been made to present accurate and up-to-date information on this page. However, procedures, laws, and rules change over time.

Court processes can be long, confusing, and difficult to understand. It is highly recommended you consult with an attorney. One way to find an attorney is through the [Akron Bar Association's Lawyer Referral Service](#)

. In some instances you might be entitled to free representation, see the [Court Appointed Counsel](#)

page for more information. However, it is also your right to represent yourself (this is often known as representing yourself "*pro se*").

The Court hosts a weekly

[Attorney Help Desk](#)

to assist people wishing to represent themselves. The following information might be helpful to you if you choose to represent yourself.

There are many different types of courts and each court hears specific types of matters. Questions pertaining to the Summit County Juvenile Court and the type of cases it handles can be found on the Court's [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page. The Court also has a large list of [Brochures](#)

which further explain the services it offers. More information about the Court can also be found in this overview:

[Summit County Juvenile Court & Detention Overview](#)

Court processes and procedures often reference confusing legal terms, the definitions to many of those terms can be found on the Court's [Definitions](#) page.

To open a case or request an order from the Court, you will need to file a complaint or motion. Examples and blank copies of a wide range of complaints and motions are available on the [Forms](#) page. Many of these are also available in the lobby of the court.

Filing a complaint or motion usually requires the payment of filings fees. The filing fees in Summit County Juvenile Court can be found here: [Filing Fees](#)

After filing a complaint or motion a hearing will be scheduled. At the hearing you will appear and present your case to a magistrate or judge. In presenting your case you will be required to follow this Court's [Local Rules](#) and the [Rules of Juvenile Procedure](#), just as an attorney representing someone.

Your job at the hearing is to give the magistrate (or judge) the facts and to convince them that they should decide in your favor.

In preparing for your hearing, you will want to collect your evidence, contact your witnesses, and make a written outline of your case.

What to do at the hearing and how to present your case:

The hearing is your opportunity to present your claim. Both you and the other party will have an opportunity to present your case and your evidence to the court.

Bring your evidence and witnesses with you. Bring enough copies of your evidence (documents, pictures, etc). Make sure your witnesses appear in-person.

Your case is likely to be one of many cases scheduled for the day. Wait your turn and respond when your case is called.

The person who filed the motion or complaint goes first. The magistrate will ask that person to give their version of what happened. After the first person is finished, the magistrate will ask the

other party for their version of the case.

Be brief and stick to the facts. Use the outline you wrote when you prepared your case. Emphasize the points in your favor and explain the points against you. The magistrate may interrupt you with questions. Answer the questions directly, politely, and to the best of your knowledge.

It will benefit you to be polite. Good manners, a calm attitude, and an orderly presentation promote a fair and efficient hearing and make a positive impression.

You will probably be nervous. Relax, be yourself, and present your case in the way that comes most easily to you. Listen carefully to what the magistrate says or asks and respond accordingly.

After hearing both sides, the magistrate will make their decision. The magistrate may state his or her decision at the end of the hearing or may decide to issue a written decision at a later date. Be sure to ask the court how you will be notified of the decision.

Adapted from "Small Claims Court, A Citizens Guide," 10th Edition. Published by the [Ohio Judicial Conference](#) in cooperation with the Ohio State Bar Foundation.

Presenting evidence:

Your evidence may include:

- √ your testimony,
- √ the testimony of witnesses,
- √ written items,
- √ items relevant to the case, and
- √ photos or diagrams.

Anything that can support your case may be useful as evidence.

It is your responsibility to make sure that the evidence you intend to present will be acceptable in court.

Witness testimony may be especially useful as evidence. Useful witnesses may include friends, neighbors, or bystanders.

It is necessary and appropriate to talk to your witnesses before the hearing. You have to ask them what they know, and if they will come and testify. When you talk to witnesses, tell them to testify truthfully. Remember that your witnesses may also need to answer questions from the other party. Shortly before the hearing, contact your witnesses again to make sure they agree to testify and confirm the time and place of the hearing.

If a witness will not voluntarily testify, you can ask the court to order the witness to testify. Such an order is called a [subpoena](#) .

How much evidence is enough? There is no easy answer. In some cases, your testimony alone may be enough, but it is likely you will need other testimony or other evidence.

More important than the quantity of evidence is the quality of your evidence. Your witnesses should be believable, have direct knowledge of the facts they testify to, and trustworthy individuals. Remember that the other party may present witnesses and evidence that conflict with yours. You want to ensure that your case is supported by the best testimony and evidence possible.

When you have gathered your evidence, including your own testimony and the testimony of other witnesses, write an outline of the points you wish to make. List your evidence and witnesses in the order you wish to present them. A good way to present your version of the story is in the sequence in which it happened.

Adapted from [Small Claims Court, A Citizens Guide](#). 10th Edition. Published by the [Ohio Judicial Conference](#) in cooperation with the Ohio State Bar Foundation.

After a hearing a magistrate will issue orders or a decision.

What if I disagree with the Magistrate's Order?

If you disagree with an order the Magistrate makes you may file a Motion to Set Aside; you must do so within 10 days of the Magistrate's Order being filed. Motions to Set Aside must also be accompanied by a transcript of the proceeding. A request for a transcript must be made pursuant to [Local Rule of Practice and Procedure 11.04\(C\)](#) .

The filing of a Motion to Set Aside does not automatically stay an Order.

More information is available in [Local Rule 3.02](#) .

What if I disagree with the Magistrate's Decision?

If you disagree with the Magistrate's Decision you can file an Objection within 14 days of the filing of the Magistrate's Decision. Objections must also be accompanied by a transcript of the proceeding. A request for a transcript must be made pursuant to [Local Rule of Practice and Procedure 11.04\(C\)](#) . Your objection will be reviewed by the Judge. The Judge may affirm and adopt the Magistrate's Decision, modify the decision, or order a new trial.

If you disagree after the Judge has decided your case, you may file an appeal to the 9th District Court of Appeals.

More information is available in [Local Rule 3.03](#) .

If you are considering filing objections or an appeal, you need to be aware that:

- 1.
- 1.

You may have to pay additional filing fees.

- 2.

If you file an objection, Motion to Set Aside, or an appeal you may have to pay the costs for a court reporter to produce a written transcript from the recording.

- 3.

The appeals process is complex and can be costly. Before you begin it, you should consult with an attorney about the merits of your complaint.

Adapted from Small Claims Court, A Citizens Guide. 10th Edition. Published by the [Ohio Judicial Conference](#) in cooperation with the Ohio State Bar Foundation.

More information regarding representing yourself can be found here:

[Your Case in Summit County Juvenile Court Brochure \(Summit County Juvenile Court\)](#)

[Preparing For Your Day In Court \(Summit County Juvenile Court\)](#)

[Representing Yourself In Court: A Citizens Guide Brochure \(Ohio Judicial Conference\)](#)

[Legal Terminology: A Citizens Guide Brochure \(Ohio Judicial Conference\)](#)

[Representing Yourself in Court: How to use photographs, letters, business records, and other evidence to help prove your case Brochure \(NAPIL Equal Justice Fellow, Ohio State Legal Services Association\)](#) --- [Southeastern Ohio Legal Services](#)

Additional links:

Victim Assistance --- <http://www.victimassistanceprogram.org/>