



# Self-Represented

**Information and Tips from a lawyer to non-lawyers**

How to succeed without a lawyer and save thousands of dollars

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## Act Responsibly – Some Do’s and Don’ts for self-represented litigants

The rising number of self-represented litigants in North America will continue to create challenges to the Administration of Justice and lawyers. This will become more pronounced in the area of family law.

While lawyers are told to act ethically toward self-represented litigants, the same should apply to those who decide to represent themselves. The right to be self-represented comes with the responsibility to act fairly and ethically toward the lawyers on the opposite side.

*Here are some Do’s and Don’ts for self-represented litigants:*

1. Do not criticize the judge trying the case or the lawyer representing your opponent.
2. Do not attempt to bribe witnesses.
3. Do not fabricate evidence.
4. Turn off your cell-phone while in the courtroom.
5. While giving evidence, don’t waste the court’s time grieving over irrelevant events.
6. If you lose your case, be a good loser.
7. If you win your case, be a good winner.
8. Avoid gossiping about your adversaries.
9. If you must file any legal document, learn the requirements and follow them. Avoid handwritten documents and check for spelling errors.
10. Avoid sending too many emails to the opposing lawyer for every little issue that comes to your mind.
11. Avoid over litigating your case by filing motion after motion.

12. Treat court clerks, secretaries and deputies with respect and courtesy.
13. Avoid making remarks that portray a gender bias.
14. If you win your case, share the credit with those who helped you.
15. If you are a self-represented litigant, do what is expected of you; provide the disclosure; meet the deadlines; file the documents.
32. If you need a court interpreter, hire a qualified interpreter or ask the court or tribunal to provide one. Don't bring your friend or relative to do the interpreting for you.
33. Improve the chances of winning your case by improving your attitude.
34. When in the courtroom no matter how dire the situation is keep your composure.
35. Never underestimate your opponent.
36. Don't try to speak to a judge in his/her chambers on any issue, even procedural, without the other side being present.
37. Attend court on time. Keep your watch 10 minutes fast.
38. Control your temper, especially before the judge
39. Be aware of the costs consequences if you lose your case, if you act unreasonably or if you get less than your opponent's offer.
40. Keep eye contact when you answer questions. Don't forget to look at the judge once in a while. He/she will make the decision.