

DOCUMENT 3

PRE-TRIAL PREPARATION AND FIRST COURT APPEARANCE

SCENARIO

You have received a citation or criminal complaint. A court date has been scheduled. Your objective is not to argue the case immediately. Your objective is to prepare properly and enter the courtroom with structure.

STEP 1 — PREPARATION

Review the trial preparation checklists. Organize your documents. Prepare your voir dire questions, opening statement, cross examination, objections, and closing argument.

STEP 2 — FILE PRO PER DOCUMENTS

Before trial, file the Motion for Recognition of Pro Per Status and complete the Certificate of Service.

STEP 3 — ARRIVE EARLY

Arrive 30–45 minutes early. Dress conservatively. Bring a binder containing all case materials.

FIRST COURT APPEARANCE – EXAMPLE

Judge: 'Are you represented by counsel?' Defendant: 'No, Your Honor. I am appearing pro per and have filed a Motion for Recognition of Pro Per Status.'

IF THE JUDGE QUESTIONS SELF-REPRESENTATION

Judge: 'Do you understand the risks of representing yourself?' Defendant: 'Yes, Your Honor. I have knowingly chosen to exercise my right of self-representation and respectfully request reasonable procedural latitude.'

IF THE COURT DENIES LATITUDE

Defendant: 'Your Honor, I respectfully object to the denial of reasonable procedural latitude and request that my objection be noted for the record.'

LD APPLICATION

At this stage you are not arguing guilt or innocence. You are establishing posture, preserving rights, and preparing to require proof rather than assumption.

FINAL REMINDER

The first appearance sets the tone for the entire case. Be calm. Be respectful. Be organized. Let preparation speak for itself.