

## ALWAYS MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION

You are in trouble because people think that you have broken the law.

There are two important things that you should think about:

- You may be given a chance to prove you can stay in the community – if so, **it's up to you to stay out of trouble.**
- You are talking to adults – not to people your own age – who are deciding if you should be at home or in detention. **If you want to go home, give them a reason to try.**

To make a good impression, think about **what** you do or say and **how** you say it.

- The **way you act** will affect how the people working on your case will treat you.
- **Be polite and respectful** – it helps to make a good impression.

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## SHOW RESPECT TO PEOPLE

You will talk to many people about your case. Some of them may have the authority to send you home or to detention.

For example, the court could find out how you acted in the detention room or at detention.

- Were you **respectful** to the person in charge of the detention room?
- Did you **curse** or use **bad language**?
- Did you get into a **fight**?

Even if you are very angry, try your best not to curse or shout or get into a fight.



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## HOW CAN YOU MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION IN THE COURTROOM?



- Don't talk to anyone except your lawyer unless someone asks you a question. **Only answer the question**, and don't say anything else.
- When you answer a question, **speak clearly**. Don't mumble and don't shout.
- When someone speaks to you – like the Judge – **look directly** at that person.
- Be **polite and respectful** to everyone. When you speak to the Judge, say "Yes, your honor" or "No, your honor."
- Sit up straight. **Don't slouch** in your chair.
- Try not to use slang.
- Don't chew gum.
- Don't leave your chair.
- **Don't argue** with anyone – if you don't agree with something, speak to your lawyer, who is there to help you.

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- If you don't understand a question, say "Will you repeat the question, please." If you still don't understand, ask your lawyer to explain the question to you.
- **If the Judge asks you a question**, you must answer it. But if your lawyer objects, don't say anything until the Judge directs you.
- If anyone who is not the Judge asks you a question, check with your lawyer before answering the question.
- If you come to the court from home, **don't bring** things like a cell phone or video games with you. They will be taken away from you.
- **Ask an adult whom you trust to come to court and speak on your behalf.**



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## WHAT SHOULD YOU WEAR TO COURT?

You should dress in a way that shows that you **respect the court**. You should show people that you **care about yourself** and that you **care about what happens to you**.



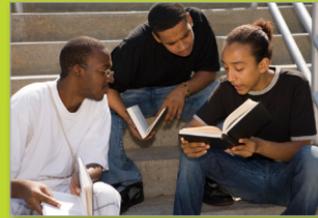
- Do not wear clothes, including belts or hats, which show that you belong to a **gang**.
- Dress neatly, and try to be as clean as you can. **Pull up your pants!**
- Boys should try to wear a button-down shirt instead of a T-shirt.
- Do not wear any clothes, including belts, which show drugs or alcohol or sex.
- Girls should be dressed neatly and in clothes that fit and are not too short or cut too low.
- **Dress simply**. Don't wear too much jewelry.
- If you have **tattoos**, cover them up with clothing if you can. For example, wear a long-sleeved shirt.
- Avoid du-rags and hats. Try to have your hair neat or pulled back.

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## IF YOU ARE SENT BACK TO DETENTION

Here are some things you should know: **Anything you do in detention can, and often does, get reported back to the Judge.**

- Follow the rules.
- Avoid fights.
- Cooperate with staff.
- Go to school if in session.
- If you have a problem, talk to your case manager or other staff you trust.
- Don't try to bring anything back to detention.



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## REMEMBER

- **You must show up for all your court appearances.**
- **Don't be late** for court.
- If you go home, don't hang out with friends who get into trouble.
- If school is in session, **go to school every day** – the Judge may put you back in detention if you don't go to school!
- **Cooperate** with the people working on your case.
- **Ask questions** if you don't understand what is expected of you.
- Go to any appointments the court or probation schedules for you.
- If you miss an appointment, call your lawyer as soon as possible to tell him or her what happened.

We hope this guide helps you through your court case.

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# WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP YOURSELF?

**NYC**  
Department of  
Juvenile Justice