

# Your steps through Toronto criminal court

(if you don't have a lawyer)





## **What to expect, one step at a time**

If you have been charged with a crime in Toronto and are handling your case without a lawyer at Self-Represented Court, this guide explains what happens next.

We have broken it down step by step so you know what to expect and when to ask for help.

- ① You do not need to memorize this. You can come back to it at any time.



## Step 1

# You have been charged and released

### What happens

You will receive papers with details about:

- What you are charged with
- When you need to go to court
- Your basic rights (for example, your right to understand the charges and your right to a trial)



## When

Right after your release



## What to do

**Keep these papers safe.**  
You will need them later.



## Need help?

If you lose your papers or do not understand them, call the court office.



## Step 2

# Learn what to expect

### What happens

You can watch short videos that explain court basics:

- Who is who in the courtroom
- What happens at each stage
- How to get ready



## **When**

**Before your first court date**



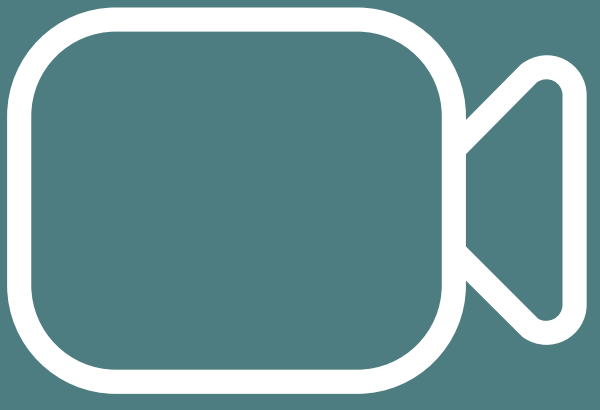
## **Where to watch**

**Online using Zoom, or  
someone at court will play the  
videos for you**



## **Tip**

**These videos will help you feel  
more prepared.**



## Step 3

# Your first court date (online)

## What happens

You will join a video meeting using your phone or computer.

- The judge will ask if you understand the charges.
- They may ask if you plan to get a lawyer.
- A new date will be set for your next step.



## **How to join**

**Use Zoom (instructions will be on your court papers)**



## **What if you miss it?**

**Call the court right away.  
Missing court could lead to serious consequences, such as a warrant for your arrest.**



## Step 4

# First in-person court visit

### What happens

You will go to the courthouse and:

- Meet with a helper (called a system navigator or duty counsel)
- Get answers to your questions
- Get help understanding your options



## Where

The courthouse address is on your court papers



## What to bring

Your court papers and identification



## Tip

Arrive 30 minutes early. Tell the security guard or court staff it is your first time. If you have any questions, you can email the system navigator at [systemnav@lao.on.ca](mailto:systemnav@lao.on.ca)



## Step 5

# Second court date (online)

## What happens

Another video meeting where:

- You will update the justice of the peace on your case
- The Crown attorney may offer a deal to settle your case
- If no deal is reached, you will move toward a trial



## **How to join**

**Use Zoom (instructions will be on the papers you are given)**



## Step 6

# Get ready for trial

### **What happens**

**A trial date will be set.  
This meeting helps everyone  
prepare and explore possible  
solutions.**



## **What to bring**

**All your court papers and any evidence you want to use**



## **Important**

**This is your chance to understand how the trial will work. Bring questions.**



## Step 7

# Your trial

### What happens

- You will attend a meeting with a judge (called a judicial pre-trial)
- You will present your side of the story
- The prosecutor will present their evidence
- The judge will decide if you are guilty or not guilty



## How long

Trials can last a few hours, a full day, or more. Some trials for self-represented people are scheduled for three days.



## After the trial

- If you are found **not guilty**, your case is over.
- If you are found **guilty**, the judge will decide your sentence. This may happen the same day or later. Sentences can include a fine, probation, or jail.

[www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca)

