



How to Format Court Documents

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- ❖ Read this only if you are filing something in a court in Washington State.
 - ❖ You can find all the fact sheets we link to here at [WashingtonLawHelp.org](https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org).
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Should I use this?

Yes, if you are doing your own court papers for a court case in Washington State.

Are there rules for how court papers should look?

Yes.

- You must use letter-sized (8½ x 11 inches) white paper.
- You must write or type on only one side of the page.
- All handwriting must be printed, readable, and in black or dark blue ink.
- The 1st page must have a margin of at least 3 inches from the top and 1 inch from the other 3 sides. Each page after that must have at least 1 inch for each margin.
- Your papers should not have any highlighting or colored marking.

You can read the rules about how to format your court papers at [Civil Rule 10\(e\)](#).

What if I do not follow these rules?

It depends. The Court Clerk's office may fine you. Or they may reject and return your papers. This could cause you to miss a court deadline.

What is a pattern form?

For many different kinds of cases, the AOC created forms you must or should use (called **mandatory forms** and **pattern forms**). Using an AOC-created form is easier than creating your own form. The AOC may change (update) forms after the law changes or for other reasons.

Should I use up-to-date forms?

Yes. Pattern forms are available for many commonly used documents. If you use a pattern form, you will know the format is correct.

Before using a pattern form, make sure it is the latest version.

The revision date (the last date the form was updated) is in the footer in the lower left corner of the form, just above the form number.

Example:

RCW 26.09.020; 26.60.100
Mandatory Form (06/2020)
FL Divorce 201

Your county's superior court may have its own forms you should use. Get those from the clerk and/or at the law library.

❖ The Administrative Office of Court website's forms should be current.

What if I do not follow the rules for formatting?

- The court may fine you.
- The clerk may return your documents to you without filing them.
- The clerk may determine that your paper or material is improper or inappropriate for filing or scanning. The court may order the paper sealed or converted to an exhibit.

Why should I review my papers before filing?

You want to look make sure there is nothing in your papers that might cause the clerk to reject your papers. Here are some things you should check for:

- All captions match the case title.
- You have filled out the case caption wherever needed.
- The case number is correct wherever you have put it.
- You have included all pages of each document.
- You scheduled a hearing on a day the judge is available to hear it.
- You put the parties' names on the case caption in the correct order.
- Your papers are formatted correctly.
- If you are trying to file an order, decree, judgment, or bond, make sure that the judge has signed it.
- You do not have to file discovery documents (read [How to use written questions and requests for documents in a family law case](#) to learn more at WashingtonLawHelp.org)

What if I have questions that this did not answer?

If your county has a family law facilitator, they may be able to help you.

Get Legal Help

- **Apply online** with [CLEAR*Online](#) - nwjustice.org/apply-online
- **Facing a legal issue in King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call 2-1-1 (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) weekdays 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- **Facing a legal issue outside of King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm or apply online at nwjustice.org/apply-online.
- **Facing Eviction?** Call 1-855-657-8387.

- **Facing Foreclosure?** Call 1-800-606-4819.
- **Seniors (age 60 and over)** with a legal issue outside of King County can also call CLEAR*^{Sr} at 1-888-387-7111.

Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired callers can call any of these numbers using the relay service of your choice.

Interpreters provided.

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