



## COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LANCASTER COUNTY, PA

### **Standards for Courtroom Decorum**

The following standards are suggested for proper courtroom decorum by attorneys but by no means are inclusive. The best standards for courtroom decorum in all situations consist of common sense, courtesy, and good manners. Attorneys always should bear in mind that they are officers of the court and they should conduct themselves accordingly.

1. Attorneys always should be on time for court appointments or court sessions.
2. Attorneys always should stand while addressing the court or jury.
3. Attorneys should address the court as "Your honor" or "May it please the court" or, during trial, "The court will remember the testimony" or similar appropriate language.
4. A male attorney appearing in court should be dressed with a coat, shirt, and necktie. A female attorney should wear comparable conservative attire.
5. All attorneys who hold or have held titles such as judge, colonel, senator, etc. may not use such titles nor should they be referred to by these titles while in the courtroom.
6. Attorneys should anticipate the major legal issues which will arise during a trial and should present briefs on them to the court at the pretrial conference, or in any event, prior to trial so that arguments and decisions can be made without using jury time.
7. Exhibits should be marked in advance of trial, where practical. Similarly, diagrams of the scene of an accident or incident should be prepared in advance and not from the witness stand.
8. Before an opening statement or a closing argument, the attorney should address the court by saying, "May it please the court" or similar words and acknowledge the opposing attorney by saying, "Mr. / Mrs. / Miss / Ms."
9. Opening statements should be confined to what the attorney expects the evidence to show.
10. Attorneys normally should remain at counsel table or maintain a substantial distance from the witness whom they are examining in order to maintain the voice level of both witness and attorney, to avoid intimidation of the witness and to avoid a tendency toward undue informality. With court permission, it is proper to approach witnesses who are hard of hearing, when handling exhibits or when asking questions about exhibits.
11. Attorneys should avoid exhibiting familiarity with witnesses, jurors, or opposing counsel. Attorneys should only refer to opposing counsel, witnesses (except children), or jurors by their last names. Only with permission of court, may a witness be addressed by the first name. Witnesses always should be treated with courtesy.
12. When objection is made to a question asked by a trial attorney the attorney should refrain from asking the witness another question until the court has had an opportunity to rule upon the objection.

13. All objections and arguments should be made to the court rather than to opposing counsel. Supporting arguments should not be made in front of the jury, but at sidebar. Bickering between attorneys during the course of a trial is impermissible.
14. After an objection has been argued and the court has announced its decision, the attorney should accept the decision and should not make further comment or argument, unless the court permits the attorney to reopen the argument.
15. An attorney desiring a sidebar conference should first obtain leave of court before approaching the bench.
16. Sidebar conferences disrupt the orderly flow of the trial and are distracting to a jury. The judge cannot ordinarily know in advance whether a requested sidebar conference is necessary, and so the burden rests upon the attorney to use discretion in requesting sidebar conferences.
17. An attorney should not by facial expression, nodding, nor other conduct, exhibit any opinion, adverse or favorable, concerning any testimony which is being given by a witness. The attorney should privately admonish his or her own clients and witnesses to avoid such conduct.
18. Attorneys, their clients, and their witnesses should have no contact with any jurors or opposing witnesses during the trial.