

# Fifteen Tips for Witnesses

1. Be yourself.
2. Be truthful.
3. If you honestly don't know an answer to a question or cannot remember, say no.
4. Being nervous is natural. Once you begin answering questions nervousness disappears.
5. Speak up, but do not shout. Do not fidget. No hands in front of mouth. No mumbling.
6. When answering, look at the jury, or the attorney.
7. Dress properly like you are going to church or going to a special occasion.
8. Do not chew gum or snack on candy or cough drops.
9. Listen to any lawyer objections and the court's ruling before answering. (OBJECTION is a legal term that means one of the attorneys feels you are being asked an improper kind of question. When you hear a lawyer say "objection," simply stop speaking and wait for the judge to rule on the objection. If the judge decides the question is proper, he/she will OVERRULE the objection. If the judge decides the question is not proper, he/she will SUSTAIN the objection. You will be told either by the judge or the attorney whether to answer that question or another question. A SIDEBAR is when the judge and the attorneys meet at the judge's bench to discuss various matters, including technical disputes over the Federal Rules of Evidence. They meet at the judge's bench so the jury cannot hear their discussion.)
10. Stay alert. Do not rush. If shown a document, review it all carefully enough to know what it is and what it reads.
11. Be courtesy and polite. Testimony is a serious matter.
12. Answer questions directly and straightforwardly, when possible. If a "yes" or "no" answer cannot be given you may tell the questioner or judge a "yes" or "no" cannot correctly answer the question.
13. Generally do not volunteer information.
14. Remember to arrive at the courthouse at the designated time so that you will have a chance to talk about the trial with the attorney or victim-witness coordinator.
15. When you are excused leave quietly and quickly.