

NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURTROOM DECORUM POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to state certain basic principles concerning courtroom behavior and decorum. When appearing in this Court, unless excused by the presiding Judge, all counsel (including all persons at counsel table) shall abide by the following:

1. Stand when Court is opened, recessed or adjourned. Stand when addressing, or being addressed by the Court. Stand when the jury enters or retires from the courtroom. When making opening statements, closing arguments or examining witnesses, do not approach either the jury or the witness without the Court's permission. Remain at the lectern unless using exhibits or charts.
2. Address all remarks to the Court, not to opposing counsel or the opposing party.
3. Avoid disparaging personal remarks or acrimony toward opposing counsel and remain wholly detached from any ill feeling between the litigants or witnesses.
4. Refer to all persons, including witnesses, other counsel and the parties by their surnames and not by their first or given names unless the permission of the Court is sought in advance.
5. Only one attorney for each party shall examine, or cross examine each witness. The attorney stating objections, if any, during direct examination, shall be the attorney recognized for cross examination.
6. Counsel should request permission before approaching the bench. Any documents counsel wishes to have the Court examine should be handed to the clerk. Any paper or exhibit not previously marked for identification should first be handed to the clerk to be marked before it is tendered to a witness for his examination; and any exhibit offered in evidence should, at the time of such offer, be handed to opposing counsel.
7. No exhibit, whether marked for identification or not, shall be held in any manner, or placed in any position in the courtroom, that would allow the trier of fact to see the exhibit unless it has been admitted into evidence and permission to publish the exhibit to the jury has been obtained from the Court.
8. In making objections, counsel should state only the legal grounds for the objection and should withhold all further comment or argument unless elaboration is requested by the Court.
9. When examining a witness, counsel shall not repeat or echo the answer given by the witness.
10. Offers of, or requests for, a stipulation should be made privately, not within the hearing of the trier of fact.
11. In opening statements and in arguments to the trier of fact, counsel shall not express personal knowledge or opinions concerning any matter in issue.
12. Counsel shall admonish all persons at the counsel table who make gestures, facial expressions, audible comments, or the like, as manifestations of approval or disapproval during the testimony of witnesses, or at any other time. This behavior is strictly prohibited.
13. All parties, attorneys and witnesses should refrain from interrupting or talking over one another.
14. Counsel shall refrain from attempting to make a re-argument after the Judge has ruled.
15. Counsel shall complete resolution negotiations and advise clients of their settlement options in advance of court hearings.
16. No tobacco use in any form is permitted. No bottles, beverage containers, paper cups or edibles are allowed in the courtroom, except as permitted by the Court. No gum chewing is permitted.
17. Cell phones and pagers should be turned off or in a vibrate mode. Computers should be used with audio off.
18. All counsel shall provide a copy of this policy to clients prior to coming to court.
19. Pursuant to Family Law Rule of Procedure 12.407, no children are allowed in the courtroom, waiting area or adjacent hallway without prior approval of the court, unless the child(ren) is a party to the action.