

The Victim/Witness Legal Assistant in the District Attorney's office prosecuting your case can help prepare you for the courtroom. The following are some helpful tips to remember when testifying at any court proceeding:

- Neat appearance and proper dress are important.
- Before testifying, try to recall the crime scene, what was there, and exactly what happened the best you can, don't try to memorize what you are going to say.
- Always tell the truth. If you do not know the answer to a question, say, "I don't know." Do not guess.
- Listen very carefully to each question, making sure you understand completely before answering. If you do not understand a question, ask for it to be repeated or rephrased.
- Speak clearly and loudly enough so that the judge and jury can hear you. Be polite, firm, and clear in your answers.
- Answer only the questions asked and then stop. Don't provide information unless you are specifically asked.
- If the questions you are asked require a "yes" or "no" answer, answer "yes" or "no" unless your answer cannot be fully understood without an explanation. You may ask the judge if you can explain your answer or elaborate.
- Stop talking if an objection is made by one of the attorneys or if the judge interrupts. The judge or one of the attorneys will tell you if you can continue your testimony. If you have forgotten the question, ask to have it repeated.
- Although you may feel nervous and frightened by testifying, it is important to be serious and focused in your approach.
- If you become upset while testifying, pause until you can regain your composure or ask the judge if you can have a few moments. The judge may call a recess to allow you this time. You may want to ask for a drink of water.
- If you are asked if you have talked with anyone about the case, answer truthfully. You have probably spoken with the police, the district attorney, family, and friends. If you say only "yes" in response to the question, the defense attorney may imply that you have been told what to say. It is best to tell whom you have spoken with and that you only have discussed the facts of the case.