

TIP₄

Should I Represent Myself?

If you want to represent yourself in court, you should consider the type of case, the complexity of the case, if you can get a lawyer for free or for a low cost, and if you are the type of person who can handle the case on your own.

Consider getting legal help if:

- You have a criminal case.
- You are a victim of domestic violence.
- You plan to sign a contract that will significantly affect your finances.
- Your case involves real estate.
- You want to organize a business.
- You're going to court regarding child custody or support, paternity, divorce, or alimony.
- You have tax problems.

In some cases, you can get a free lawyer if you can't afford one. Examples include:

- Delinquency cases.
- Child abuse cases.
- Termination of parental rights cases.
- A criminal case where you are the defendant.

In some cases, you may be able to hire a lawyer without paying up front. Examples include:

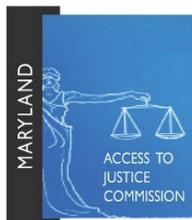
- Cases involving an accident or personal injury where you are the plaintiff.

You may be able to represent yourself if:

- You are organized, pay attention to detail, and can keep good records.
- You can stick to deadlines and be on time.
- You are decisive and know your goals.
- You can observe and react to situations as they occur.
- You're comfortable speaking in public and can explain your story to a judge or jury.
- You have the time to handle a lawsuit.
- You're comfortable using legal information websites or a law library.
- Your case is not too complicated.

You should still consider hiring a lawyer if:

- You can't afford to lose this case.
- You're emotional about this case and might make poor or impulsive decisions.
- You have a close relationship with the other side.
- You don't understand the papers you received from the court or the other side or don't know the legal basis for your claim.
- You want to appeal your case.
- The other side has a lawyer.



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