

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS
DOMESTIC RELATIONS AND GUARDIANSHIP FORMS
(Form CC-DRIN)**

Use the CC-DR and CC-GN Forms if you do not have a lawyer and need to file papers for family law or domestic relations cases. These cases include child custody or visitation, child support, divorce, alimony, name change, contempt, and guardianship. These Instructions answer the following questions:

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DO I NEED A LAWYER?

The answer is probably YES if:

- The case is contested and the other side (opposing party) has a lawyer.
- You do not have an address for or cannot locate the other side to serve them with your papers.
- The court may need information that you cannot get.
- This is a child custody case and there is a dispute about who should have custody.
- This is a divorce case and either side has a house, pension / retirement account, or a large amount of property or income. Even if you both agree to divorce, speak with a lawyer before signing settlement agreements or filing papers with the court.
- This is a divorce after a long-term marriage (about 10 or more years) and / or you want alimony.
- This is an annulment case.

NOTE: You may speak with or hire a lawyer at any time during your case. Hiring a lawyer at the last minute is usually not grounds for a postponement of your hearing or trial date. Many lawyers may not accept a case close to a hearing or trial date if they believe there is not enough time to prepare.

WHAT LEGAL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

Use the following resources if you need assistance with your case, legal information, or to find a lawyer:

Civil Clerks - Each court has a civil clerk who may give you information about where to file your family law case papers, filing costs, and fee-waiver request forms. Clerks cannot give legal advice, complete forms, or tell you how to complete forms. Ask the clerk about other self-help resources and services available.

Maryland Courts Self-Help Center - This program provides free, limited legal help by telephone or live chat for people with civil cases who do not have a lawyer. The Self-Help Center is staffed by lawyers who cannot represent you in court.

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Telephone: (410) 260-1392

Live Chat: Accessed directly from www.mdcourts.gov under Legal Help.

Family Law Self-Help Centers/Family Law Help/Pro Se Assistance - Each circuit court offers information, assistance, or referrals if you do not have a lawyer. Services vary by court but may include help with selecting the correct forms, legal information, and general guidance. Self-Help Center attorneys and staff cannot represent you in court or complete forms.

Family Services Programs - Available in each circuit court, services differ by program, and may include custody evaluators, mediators, and more. Visit www.mdcourts.gov/family for information.

The People's Law Library of Maryland (www.peoples-law.org) - This legal information and self-help website has information on family law, domestic violence, housing, consumer law, and state and federal benefit programs. The website includes links to resources for free or reduced-fee lawyer referrals and to the Maryland Courts Self-Help Center live chat.

Family Law Hotline - This Hotline is staffed by lawyers and is free to low income callers. Hotline lawyers give information about Maryland family law to help you understand your rights and legal options. Hotline lawyers cannot represent you in court but may give you the phone number of a lawyer referral service.

Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Telephone: 1-800-845-8550

Self -Help Video Library - The online library includes videos on court processes, resources, and law topics and is available at mdcourts.gov/videos.

Maryland Law Help App - This free mobile app connects you with legal information on your smartphone or tablet. The app includes links to self-help videos, court form finders, direct access to legal help by phone or chat, public law libraries, mediation resources, and more.

Visit: <http://www.mdcourts.gov/legalhelp/mobileapp.html>.

WHERE SHOULD I FILE MY CASE?

The type of case determines where to file your case. If you are unsure about where to file, speak with a lawyer.

- File an initial **DIVORCE** (Absolute or Limited) or Annulment case in the circuit court in the county where you live OR in the circuit court in the county where your spouse lives or works.
- File an initial **CHILD CUSTODY, VISITATION, or CHILD SUPPORT** case in the circuit court in the county where the child(ren) or either parent lives. Different rules may apply if the child(ren) currently live(s) outside of Maryland. Speak with a lawyer if you are unsure.
- File a **CHANGE OF NAME** case in the circuit court in the county where you live.
- File a **PETITION FOR GUARDIANSHIP** in the circuit court in the county where the minor or alleged disabled person lives if he or she is a Maryland resident. If the minor or alleged disabled person does not live in Maryland, file a petition in the circuit court in the county in which he or she is physically present in Maryland. If you are requesting guardianship of the property, you may also file the petition in any circuit court in the county in which the minor or alleged disabled person has property such as a house.
- File a **PETITION FOR PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** in either the circuit or District Court in any county.
- File an **ANSWER** to a complaint, petition, or motion in the court where the initial paper was filed.
- File a request to **MODIFY or ENFORCE** (by **contempt filing**) a court order in the same court and **under the same case number** as the existing case. A request to modify reopens the initial case.

File a **MOTION FOR RESTORATION OF FORMER NAME in the same court and **under the same case number** as your absolute divorce case.

HOW MUCH WILL THIS COST?

There are filing fees for all cases except Protection from Domestic Violence cases, and a Motion for Restoration of Former Name. You must prepay these fees before the court will open your case.

If you cannot afford the filing fees, ask the court to waive them at the beginning of your case by filing a **Request for Waiver of Prepaid Costs (CC-DC-089)** with your initial papers. If the court grants your request, you will not pay the fees at the time of filing and your case will move forward. If the court denies your request, you have 10 days to pay the filing fee. If you do not pay the fees, your case will **not** move forward. Fees vary from county to county and depend on whether the case is new or is being reopened. Contact your county's court clerk, or visit the court's website for a list of filing fees and costs.

If you are granted a Waiver of Prepaid Costs, you may be required to pay court fees and costs at the end of your case. If you can't afford to pay the fees at the end of the case, you may ask the court to waive them at the end of the final hearing in your case or by filing a **Request for Final Waiver of Open Costs (CC-DC-090)**.

For information about fee waivers, consult a lawyer or visit: mdcourts.gov/legalhelp/filingfeewaivers.html or speak with a lawyer.

There is also a fee if you have the Sheriff's Office serve your papers on the opposing party (See "WHAT IS SERVICE OF PROCESS?"). The court clerk will provide you with a fee quote. If you are granted a waiver of prepayment of fees, this usually includes the Sheriff's fee. The Self-Help Video Library at www.courts.state.md.us/reference/videolibrary has a video about service of process.

HOW DO I START MY CASE?

Review the list of court forms in the Courts link on the Maryland Judiciary website (www.mdcourts.gov). Choose the form, with instructions, for the kind of family law case you want to file. If you need help deciding which form to use, contact one of the resources listed in WHAT LEGAL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

Forms are also available from the civil clerk. Civil clerks **cannot** tell you which forms to file or complete the forms for you.

- Review the instructions carefully and complete the form. Complete all forms required for the case you are filing, including any financial statements if you are seeking child support, alimony, or property distribution.
- Complete **Civil-Domestic Case Information Report (CC-DCM-001)**. This form helps the court understand the issues in your case and estimate the time for case scheduling.
- **Before filing**, make sure that all names and complete addresses are clearly written on each form. If it's a new case, the clerk will assign a case number when you file. If you are reopening a case, include the case number on all forms. Make at least two (2) copies of **all forms**: One (1) set for yourself **AND** one (1) for service on the other side. The clerk's office is not responsible for making copies, and may charge for each page copied.
- File completed and signed forms in the clerk's office with the filing fee, or Request for Waiver of Prepaid Costs (CC-DC-089) (do not serve a copy of the Request for Waiver on the other side). If you file a Request for Waiver of Prepaid Costs, the clerk will not docket your case until a judge decides whether to grant the fee waiver request.
- Once your case is docketed, the clerk's office will issue a **Writ of Summons**. This may take a few days to a week or two (2), depending on whether you filed a Request for Waiver of Prepaid Costs (CC-DC-089). After the clerk issues the Writ of Summons, the case is ready for **service of process** on the other side. **Exception:** if you are filing a Motion for Restoration of Former Name **within 30 days** of your divorce judgment, a Writ of Summons is not required for service.

NOTE: Your signature on each form is made under oath and you are stating that the information and statements are true and correct to the best of your knowledge.

WHAT IS SERVICE OF PROCESS?

Service of Process (or "service") is the way the court knows that the other side receives copies of the papers you filed with the court. The Self-Help Video Library at www.courts.state.md.us/reference/videolibrary contains information about service of process. If the other side is not properly served, your case will not move forward.

- Service must take place within 60 days of the date on the Writ of Summons. If service is not completed before 60 days, file a written request for the clerk to reissue a new Writ of Summons. There is no cost to request a new summons.
- Initial Service may take place any place where the person being served is known to be (it does not need to occur at the address listed on the forms).
- The person filing papers with the court must make sure the other side receives complete copies of those papers.

How do I serve someone?

If you are serving an **initial** complaint, petition, or motion, including one (1) that reopens a prior case, a third party must serve the papers and the Writ of Summons on the other side.

NOTE: Law enforcement officials serve Petitions for Protection from Domestic Violence after the court issues an interim, temporary, or final Protective Order. There is no fee.

Methods of Service:

****IMPORTANT: You may NOT serve the other side yourself directly, or by certified mail, when serving a Writ of Summons and an initial filing (or papers that are reopening a previous case) ****

Service by Sheriff - For a fee (if not waived), the clerk can forward the Writ of Summons with a copy of the filing to the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff will attempt service and file the required Return of Service with the court as proof service was made. If you decide later to use the Sheriff's Office, forward the Writ of Summons and a complete copy of the filing to the Sheriff's Office with payment or a copy of the fee waiver order.

Service by Private Process - Forward the Writ of Summons and the complete copy of the filing to a private process server. He or she will serve the other side and file an **Affidavit of Service** with the court as proof service was completed. Private process companies charge a fee and have their own Affidavit of Service form that they file. Private process may also be made by a third person who is: 1) over 18, and 2) not involved in the case. Give this person an **Affidavit of Service (Private Process) (CC-DR-055)** to complete. You cannot complete the Affidavit, but you may file it with the court.

Service by Certified Mail, Restricted Delivery - Send the Writ of Summons and a complete copy of the filing by certified mail, return receipt with restricted delivery. **Do not send it yourself. It must be mailed by a third person who is: 1) over the age of 18, and 2) not involved in the case.** Service is completed when the person being served *personally* signs the certified mail return receipt card, which will be returned to the person (**not you**) who mailed the papers for service. That person must complete an **Affidavit of Service (Certified Mail) (CC-DR-056)** after the certified mail return receipt card is returned. You must attach the original return receipt card to the Affidavit of Service and file it with the court. Keep a copy of both sides of the certified mail return receipt card.

To serve an **Answer (CC-DR-050)** to a complaint, petition, or motion that was served on you, you must complete the certificate of service on the last page. Mail a complete copy of your Answer, and any papers you attach, to the other side. Service of your answer is complete when you mail a properly addressed envelope with correct postage by first class regular mail to the other side (or his or her lawyer). A third person does not need to complete this service. If you do not fill out the Certificate of Service, the clerk's office will not docket, or record, your answer.

All papers filed with the court by either person after the initial complaint, petition, motion, or answer must be sent to the other side, using the process described in the paragraph above. You must complete a **Certificate of Service (CC-DR-058)** and attach it to all papers filed with the court.

What if service is not made?

If service of the **initial complaint, petition, or motion** is not successful OR you do not know where the other side is, the case cannot proceed until **alternate service** is made. **Alternate service is complex; you should speak with a lawyer.**

If you have made several attempts to make service of process by Sheriff, private process server, or certified mail, OR if you have been unable to find where the other side lives or works, you may file **Motion for Alternate Service (CC-DR-070)** with **Notice-Alternate Service (CC-DR-072)** AND **Affidavit (CC-DR-073)**. Attach proof of your service efforts or efforts to locate the other side. Once filed, these forms and documents ask a judge to allow you to use another form of service. If granted, you will notify the other side of your court filings by posting your complaint, petition, or motion on the Sheriff's bulletin board in the courthouse, or by another reasonable method the judge orders. There is a fee for the Sheriff to post notice for alternate service.

If the Sheriff posted notice of alternate service, the Sheriff's office will file proof with the court. If the court ordered another form of alternate service, you must file proof with the court that it was completed.

The Maryland Judiciary's self-help video library has a helpful video and resources on service of process at <http://www.mdcourts.gov/video/selfhelp/serviceofprocess.html>.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER SERVICE IS MADE?

Once service of process is made (either direct service or by alternate service) **AND** proof of service is filed with the court, the other side has the chance to file an **ANSWER**. The other person may also file a motion challenging service, jurisdiction, or other aspects of your complaint, petition, or motion. If the other side resides or was served:

- Within Maryland, he or she has **30 days** to file a response.
- In another state, he or she has **60 days** to file a response.
- In another country, he or she has **90 days** to file a response.

After service is received, an opposing party must respond and may use an **Answer to Complaint / Petition / Motion (CC-DR-050)**. He or she may file a **counter-complaint** (for example, **Counter-Complaint for Absolute Divorce (CC-DR-094)** or **Counter-Complaint for Custody (CC-DR-095)**) **with his / her answer**.

Once an answer is timely filed, the court will begin scheduling the case (See **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**).

Order and Notice of Default

If no Answer is filed by the deadline after service, file a **Request for Order of Default (CC-DR-054)**. The judge will grant the Order of Default if he or she is satisfied that the other side is not presently in the military and proof of service has been filed with the court. The clerk's office will issue a **Notice of Default**. The other side has 30 days to file a written explanation about why an Answer was not filed and ask the court to vacate (cancel) the Order of Default. If the other side does not respond to the Notice of Default, the case may move forward without his or her participation.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

After each side's papers have been filed and served, or an Order of Default is granted, the court will schedule your case.

A **scheduling conference** is generally set first. Both sides meet with a magistrate or judge, who may make referrals for services, and set dates and deadlines. The clerk's office or the court's assignment office will mail you a notice with a scheduling conference date. If you do not attend your scheduling conference, your case may not move forward.

Most courts also schedule a **pre-trial settlement conference**, where a judge or magistrate meets with both sides to make sure that case is ready for trial and to see if settlement is possible. If there is an agreement, you may not have a trial, or may reduce the trial time.

If your case is **uncontested** (i.e., there are no disagreements between you and the other side) **OR** an Order of Default has been entered, some courts will automatically schedule a hearing. You will receive notice of this date.

If a reasonable period of time passes after the filing of an Answer or Order of Default and you have not received notice from the court, you may file a **Request for Hearing or Proceeding (CC-DR-059)**.

NOTE: You may be eligible for the Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program. The program provides a substitute address for victims of domestic violence who have moved or are about to move to a location unknown to their abuser. It also offers free confidential mail-forwarding for first-class mail and legal papers. Application assistants can help you apply. Call 1-800-633-9657 ext. 3875, visit <http://sos.maryland.gov/ACP>, or email safe.athome@maryland.gov.

WHAT HAPPENS IN COURT?

At your hearing or trial, you have an opportunity to testify. Witnesses who have first-hand knowledge about your case may also testify. You may present evidence that may be accepted by the court under the **Rules of Evidence**. The other side will also have a chance to present his / her side of the case and offer testimony, witnesses, and evidence. Each side may cross-examine (ask questions of) the other side's witnesses about their testimony. In preparing for your court day, keep the following in mind:

- Arrive **before** your scheduled trial time. You must go through security and find the courtroom where your case will be heard.
- Prepare the documents and evidence that you want to show the court. Have **at least three (3)** copies of any documents you bring: one (1) for the court, one (1) for the other side, and one (1) for yourself. **The court is not required to make copies for you.**
- If you filed the initial case and fail to appear for the hearing date, your case may be dismissed. If a Counter-Complaint was filed and you fail to appear, the other side may still proceed and could be granted the relief requested in his or her papers.
- If you have an emergency that prevents you from appearing for your hearing, **contact the court** before the hearing. However, contacting the court does not necessarily mean that your case will be postponed.
- Children under 18 should not be witnesses in a divorce or custody trial. However, if the court has ordered you to bring your child(ren) to court, you must do so. If you believe your child(ren)'s testimony is necessary, speak with a lawyer about how to present this to the court. If a parent must be in court, and needs child care, some courthouses provide this service. Please check the website of the courthouse.
- When the hearing or trial is complete, the magistrate or judge will make a decision. He or she may state the facts, evidence, and the law that applies in their decision (or **ruling**) either that day or in a written decision mailed to both sides on a later date.
- You should consider consulting or hiring a lawyer to help you.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER COURT?

What happens after a decision is made depends on whether a judge or magistrate heard your case.

- If your hearing was in front of a judge, he or she will sign a final order. You may receive the order at the end of the hearing or by mail.
- If your hearing was in front of a magistrate, he or she will issue a Report and Recommendations with findings of fact and a proposed order. A judge will review it before it becomes final. After 10 days, a judge will sign the order and it will be mailed to both sides.
- If either party believes that the magistrate or judge made an error in applying the law in their case, there are procedures for requesting the court to review the decisions and orders. You may file exceptions to a magistrate's report, or an appeal of a judge's decision to another (higher) court. **Requests for review, exceptions, or an appeal are complex with specific requirements and strict deadlines. Speak with a lawyer before filing any further papers.**

DICTIONARY

GLOSSARY OF COMMON LEGAL TERMS

Affidavit: A written statement made under oath.

Alimony: Court-ordered payments made by one (1) spouse to the other for support.

Annulment: A court's decision that a marriage is void; it never legally existed. It is available only under certain limited circumstances.

Answer: A written response to a complaint, petition or motion.

Arrears: The amount of money a person failed to pay when due. A person who does not make court-ordered payments such as alimony or child support is "in arrears" for the amount he or she owes.

Certificate of Service: A written statement filed with the court as proof that copies of papers filed with the court were given to the appropriate parties.

Child Custody: Court-ordered arrangement of who children live with and how decisions about them will be made. There are two (2) types of custody:

Legal Custody/Decision-making authority: Refers to how long-term decisions about children's education, health, religion, etc. are made.

Physical Custody/Parenting time: Refers to where children live and the amount of time they spend with each parent.

Child support: The amount of financial and other support each parent is responsible to provide for the care of their minor child(ren).

Child support guidelines: Maryland's guidelines are used to determine the appropriate amount of child support. The guidelines formula calculates support based on the number of children in the family, additional expenses (for example, child care and health insurance), and the combined gross income of the adults. The court may award child support higher or lower than the guidelines. See the Annotated Code of Maryland, Family Law Article, Sections 12-201 through 12-204.

Civil (or Court) Clerk: A court employee who receives and maintains case files and issues some court documents such as writs of summons, copies of court orders, and other notices.

Complaint: One (1) type of legal paper that starts a case. The person who files the initial case is referred to as the plaintiff and the person against whom the complaint is made is the defendant.

Contempt: The failure to follow a court order. One (1) side may request that the court determine that the other side is in contempt. If the court determines that a person is "in contempt," it can punish him or her.

Contested Case: A case that involves one (1) or more disputed issues.

Counter-Complaint/Counterclaim: A complaint the defendant files against the plaintiff after the plaintiff's initial complaint.

Custody: The legal arrangements regarding with whom a child will live and how decisions about the child will be made. Custody has two (2) parts: legal and physical. Legal custody refers to decision-making authority. Physical custody refers to the child(ren)'s time with each parent. Parents may agree on the custody arrangement that is in the best interest of their child(ren). If the court decides custody, the judge determines what is in the best interest of the children, and makes an order.

Decision/Judgment/Opinion/Ruling: The result reached by the court in resolving the disputes in a case.

Default: A party's failure to file a timely answer to a complaint, motion or petition after proper service of process has been made. After a certain time has passed, the plaintiff can ask the court for a default judgment.

Default Judgment: A court's finding on behalf of a plaintiff because the defendant did not respond to a complaint, motion, or petition.

Defendant: The person the case is brought against. If a defendant files a counter-complaint, he or she becomes the counter-plaintiff.

Discovery: A process in which each party is allowed to investigate the other side's case and get information related to the case before a trial or hearing. Special rules determine how and when discovery occurs.

Discovery methods include:

- **Interrogatories:** Written questions one side gives the other side to answer under oath.
- **Oral Depositions:** In-person question-and-answer sessions about the facts of a case. Answers are made under oath and recorded.
- **Requests for Production, Inspection and Copying of Documents:** Asking one (1) party to give the other party documents related to the case.
- **Orders for mental or physical examinations:** Asking a party to be examined by an expert.
- **Requests for Admissions of Fact:** Asking the party to admit to facts so that those facts do not have to be decided by the court.

Dissolution: Another name for the legal end of a marriage.

Divorce: A process for the ending of a marriage. There are two (2) types of divorce:

- **Absolute Divorce:** The legal ending of a marriage. Once granted, both parties can remarry.
- **Limited Divorce:** Establishes certain legal arrangements regarding custody, alimony, use of the marital home, etc., while the parties are separated. Does not end the marriage (spouses cannot remarry).

Evidence: Testimony of witnesses and documents presented to and considered by the court in making a decision. Rules of evidence are complicated and technical, you should consider consulting or hiring a lawyer to help you.

Exhibit: A document or object admitted into evidence to prove or disprove an issue in court.

Filing: The process of giving the clerk of the court papers in a case. Those papers are also called "filings." Some filings require payment of fee.

Grounds for Divorce: The legal basis for a divorce. The law sets out specific circumstances under which a divorce may be granted. Before the court will grant a divorce, the person seeking the divorce must prove that those conditions exist.

Hearing: A legal proceeding during which an issue is presented to a judge or magistrate.

Judge: A court official with the authority to hear and make decisions about a case.

Judgment: A court's decision (the final order of the court). For example, the court will enter a Judgment of Absolute Divorce. A judgment also refers to the grant of money such as for fees and costs, contempt fees, or attorney fees to be paid by the other party.

Jurisdiction: Refers to the authority of the court to hear and decide a case.

Marital Property: All property acquired during the marriage, even it is not titled in both names, with some exceptions. See Annotated Code of Maryland, Family Law Article, Section 8-201(e) for definition and Sections 8-203 through 8-205 for how the court treats marital property. Marital property can be divided when spouses divorce. If spouses cannot agree, the court will decide. You should consider consulting or hiring a lawyer.

Family Use Personal Property: Personal property acquired during the marriage and used for family purposes (e.g., family car, family home, furniture, appliances, etc.).

Use and Possession: Under certain circumstances the court may grant use and possession to the parent who has primary custody of the minor child(ren) of the marriage, allowing that parent and the child(ren) to live in the family home and/or use family property for up to three (3) years from the date of the divorce.

Family Magistrate: A court official who hears cases. A magistrate's decision is reviewed by a judge before it is final.

Mediation: A process in which the parties meet with a trained, neutral third-party (a mediator) who helps them resolve issues and reach an agreement. With some exceptions, most courts refer parties in family law cases involving children to mediation.

Modification: A change to an existing order. A party asking the court for a modification must show that there has been a "material change in circumstance" since the date of the existing order.

Motion: A request during a case for the court to take certain action in a case.

Non-Marital property: Property acquired before marriage by one spouse, third-person gifts to one spouse, and inheritances made to one spouse. Non-marital property will not be divided by the court unless the spouses agree, or the property has been commingled with marital property.

Oath: A promise to tell the truth subject to criminal penalties for lying. Oaths can be oral (for example, made in court while testifying or during a deposition) or written (for example, by signing a form or an affidavit).

Order: A written directive to the parties based on a ruling/decision of the court about the issues stated in a complaint, petition, motion, or other matter; a command that one or both parties must follow.

Order of Default: A court's order allowing a party's case to proceed without the participation of the other party, who failed to file a timely Answer after proper service of process was made.

Parties: The two (2) sides in a case; the plaintiff and the defendant. There may be more than one (1) plaintiff and defendant named in a case.

Pendente Lite: Temporary arrangements for child custody, child support, child visitation, alimony, use and possession of the family home/property, etc. until a final hearing or trial in a case.

Petition: One (1) type of legal paper that starts a case. The person who files the case is the petitioner. The person who is served is the respondent. For example a Petition for Protection from Domestic Violence or a Petition for Contempt.

Plaintiff: The person who files the initial case. If a counter-complaint is filed by the opposing party, the plaintiff also becomes the "counter-defendant."

Pro se/Self-Represented Litigant/Proper Person: A person who represents themselves in court without a lawyer.

Reconciliation: Married but separated people getting back together.

Service of Process (or "Service"): Providing a copy of the papers being filed to the other side.

Spouse: The person to whom you are married; husband or wife.

Subpoena: A form issued by the court requiring someone to appear in court and/or to provide documents.

Uncontested Divorce Case: When neither spouse disagrees with the divorce *and* there are no issues for the court to decide about children, money or property.

Venue: The county or city where the case is heard.

Writ of Summons: A form issued by the court directing a party to respond to a complaint, motion or petition.