



Conciliation Court

The Law

Conciliation Court is sometimes called “the people’s court”. It is one of the courts in district court and is a simple process for civil cases involving disputes up to \$7,500.

Conciliation Court is

- Inexpensive, there is a filing fee but if you are low income you might not have to pay it. Ask the court clerk.
- Speedy, you can get a conciliation court date within a couple of months
- Informal, many of the normal rules don’t apply and you don’t need a lawyer.

WHAT TYPES OF CASES GO TO CONCILIATION COURT?

A variety of cases. Some examples are disagreements over unpaid rent, security deposit, property damage, auto accidents, merchandise warranties, faulty repairs.

WHERE DO I FILE MY CASE?

Go to the county where the person you are suing lives. If you are suing a business, go to the county where the business has an office. If you are suing your landlord, go to the county where your apartment is located.

The defendant may file a counterclaim for any claims he or she has against you. The court will hear both cases at the same time.

HOW DO I BRING A CASE TO CONCILIATION COURT?

1. Complete a form provided by the court clerk. Information you will need to include:
 - names and addresses of parties
 - amount of the claim, can’t exceed \$7,500
 - reasons why you are suing
2. Gather all evidence, including receipts, estimates, photographs, written notes. Etc. You will need to prove the amount of your claim.
3. Prepare your story. In conciliation court, you have the chance to tell your side of the story and the defendant will have a chance to tell his or her side of the story. Make sure you remember every thing by writing it down in an outline.
4. If you have witnesses, talk to them and ask them to come with you to the hearing. The judge may have questions for them.
5. Practice presenting your case.



6. Bring everything with you to court. Be polite to everyone, including the defendant. Don't interrupt others.

WHAT IF I CAN'T GET TO COURT FOR MY HEARING?

You will automatically lose. In some cases, the court will give you a continuance until you can make it if you ask at least five days before your court date. However, continuances are granted only on a limited basis. You will not get a continuance because you have to work.

WHEN WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE WON?

The court will probably take the case under advisement. This means that the judge will consider your case and issue an answer at a later date. You will be notified by mail. If you win, you will have to collect the money owed you from the defendant. This is sometimes very difficult to do.

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Activity: You decide

Which of the following disputes do you think can be settled in conciliation court? Explain your answer.

1. A high school student is expelled for wearing a swastika armband to school. He seeks to be re-admitted to school.
2. Juanita takes her 1988 Toyota to the repair shop for a \$39.99 tune-up and oil change. When she picks it up she is told the bill is \$87.00 and that she would have to pay it or she could not take the car. She pays and now wants the difference paid back.
3. The owner of an apartment building wants tenants to pay for the damage that they caused. The price of the repair work is \$10,000.
4. Sonia bought a \$600 TV from a local electronics store. It had a 90-day warranty. After 100 days, the TV quit working. Sonia called the store and they told her to bring it in and they would repair it for free. When she picked it up, they charged her \$150.

5. Jackie parked her car on the street outside of her apartment. The owner of the apartment building was having the roof repaired. He did not tell the tenants that they should move their cars away from the building. Jackie's car was covered with spots of hot tar. Jackie wants the owner to pay to have the car repainted. The cost is \$1,200. The owner refuses. He claims that he can't be responsible for the wind blowing the tar around.

6. Janey wants the tobacco companies to pay for her medical costs associated with early stages of lung disease. So far, the costs are \$5,400.

6. Amy works at an all night grocery store. She dislikes working when Al works because he always tells dirty jokes, pokes fun of her, and makes suggestive comments. Amy wants the court to tell Al that he has to quit behaving like this.