

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE WITNESS AT A GRIEVANCE MEETING

1. Be respectful. Just tell the truth. "Yes sir" "No sir."
2. Never argue or lose your temper -- leave your temper at home.
3. Speak slowly and clearly. Answer verbally. Don't shake your head yes or no. Wait until the complete question is asked before you begin your answer.
4. If you don't understand the question, ask that it be explained. If you don't the fact finder will be able to assume that you have understood the question, and you may be giving the wrong information.
5. Facts of the occurrence -- Answer all questions directly, giving brief answers to the questions, and stop talking.
6. **Never** volunteer any information. Wait until the question is asked -- answer it and stop. If you can answer "yes" or "no" do so and stop. Explain your answer, only if necessary, but **don't make speeches.**
7. **Answer only the question that was asked, not the one you wanted the questioner to ask or the one you were afraid the questioner would ask. Just answer the question.**
8. Be conservative with respect to a description of your perception of what happened. Adopt an unexaggerated attitude toward what has happened.
9. Stick to the facts, and testify to only that which you personally know.
10. Testify only to "basic facts" and do not attempt to give opinions or estimates unless you have good reason for knowing such matters.
11. Be positive -- don't say "I think" or "I believe," "I guess," "maybe" "possibly," or "perhaps." It is better to say "as I recall" or "in my judgment." Never be afraid to say I don't know.
12. Tell the truth about the activities that you have been engaged in since the incident. Having to deal with a negative fact is better than having to deal with an evasive answer or being impeached by the other side.
13. Remember, your appearance is important. Be neat and clean. If you feel comfortable in business attire, you should consider wearing a suit or sport coat with a tie. You will be "on display" for a brief period, so wear clothes that do not detract from your concentration.
14. Estimates of time and distance. Unless you know of precise and exact measurements, avoid speaking in terms of specific distances or times. It is very important to be specific if you can be, however.
15. If you don't know the answer to the question, admit it. Some witnesses think they should have an answer for every question asked. You cannot know all the facts, and you do yourself a disservice if you attempt to testify to facts with which are not acquainted. It is important that you be honest and straightforward in your testimony.
16. Don't try to memorize your story. Justice requires only that a witness tell his story to the best of his ability.

17. Take your time. Give the question and your answers as much thought as is necessary to answer the question honestly.
18. Don't guess. If you know, say so, but don't guess. If you don't know say you don't know.
19. Previous testimony or statements – if you have testified previously on this matter or given a previous statement, your best answer is that “if it's written there, then I must have said it.” This may not be accurate, however, if the statement is one that you did not actually write yourself, or if it is not a court reported statement. You may always explain what you meant.
20. Don't say “That's all I know.” Later from your notes or from memory you may remember something else, so it is better to say “That's all I recall at this moment.”
21. At the end of the meeting, you will almost surely be asked if you have anything else to add. Unless you have a smoking gun that no one knows about which will absolute your innocence or the validity of your grievance, you should answer, “No,” in a respectful manner.

If you follow the above guidelines and suggestions, you will be better grievant and enhance the chances of a good outcome.

“The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do.”

-Thomas Jefferson,

Third President of the United States (1743-1826)