

The Traffic Court Field Guide

Sponsored by Ticket to the Streets
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Appearing in Court

Appearing in traffic court can be intimidating, especially if it's the first time you've done it. Luckily, by following just a few steps, you can significantly increase your chances of getting your ticket dismissed.

Dressing Appropriately

It might seem subtle, but many (if not most!) traffic court judges are pretty old-fashioned, and looking the part is important.

- Men: Suit, or a dress shirt and pants
- Women: Conservative dress, business suit, or dress pants and a dress shirt.
- Wear only necessary jewelry.

Courtroom Rules

Exact rules vary from judge to judge, but these guidelines are pretty general.

- Arrive early; wait outside the courtroom.
- Cell phone use is prohibited.
- Do not eat, drink, or chew gum.
- No outside conversations are allowed.

Presenting your Argument

Preparing your argument well is vital to getting a good outcome. In general, the more evidence you can provide, the better.

- If your ticket is because of a missing or obscured sign, take a picture, print it out, and bring it with you to court.
- If your ticket is because of a leasee, make sure you've taken the necessary steps. (Check out our site for more.)
- Write out the argument you're going to make, and practice it a few times.
- If you'll be reading your statement off a script, make sure to bring a paper copy.

Allowable Defenses

The City of Chicago only allows individuals to contest traffic tickets for only a certain number of reasons, as set by the Municipal Code of Chicago. This guide only has the most common defenses — check out our website for more.

Guide to Allowable Defenses

"Not my car!"

1. You weren't the owner of the vehicle.
2. Your plates were stolen.
3. You leased your vehicle to somebody else. (If this is you, check out our website.)

"I had permission!"

4. You were in a funeral procession.
5. You're an authorized emergency vehicle.

"No double jeopardy!"

6. You recieved another ticket for this. (Speeding: within 15 mins & 1/8th mile)

"There wasn't a sign or meter!"

7. Inoperable parking meter.
8. Missing or obscured street signs.

Bus Lane Violations

9. You were making a right-hand turn.
10. (If not a taxi) You stopped to drop off passengers and didn't block a bus.
11. (If a taxi) You stopped to quickly drop off passengers.

Other:

12. Facts in the violation are inconsistent or don't represent a violation.
13. The violation has been corrected. (e.g., city sticker)

Not all defenses apply for every situation. If you're not sure if a defense applies, make sure to check out our site for more info.