

# 24-Hour Hearing Preparation Checklist

*ThreadLock.ai | Family Law Court Readiness Guide*

*For Family Court, Divorce Court, Child Custody, and Support Hearings*

Use this comprehensive checklist during the 24 hours before your family court hearing to ensure procedural, evidentiary, and mental readiness. Whether you're in California, Texas, Florida, New York, or any U.S. jurisdiction, these preparation steps apply to divorce hearings, child custody proceedings, child support modifications, domestic violence restraining orders, and all family law matters.

*Applicable to: Pro se litigants (self-represented parties), parties with limited legal assistance, and anyone preparing for family court proceedings in superior court, circuit court, district court, or family court divisions nationwide.*

## 1. Courtroom Logistics & Technology Verification

*Court appearance failures are the #1 preventable mistake. Verify every detail 24 hours in advance.*

- ☐ **Verify Hearing Format:** Confirm whether your hearing is in-person, via Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, or telephone. Check your court's online portal, the notice of hearing, or call the clerk's office. Some jurisdictions (e.g., Los Angeles County, Cook County, Miami-Dade) have different protocols for different case types.
- ☐ **Confirm Department/Courtroom Number:** Court assignments change frequently. Log into your jurisdiction's case management system (e.g., Odyssey, Tyler, CMS) to verify your assigned department, judge, and room number. Screenshot this information.
- ☐ **Remote Hearing Technology Test:** If appearing remotely, test your equipment 24 hours prior: microphone clarity, camera functionality, internet bandwidth (minimum 5 Mbps upload), and audio output. Use a neutral, well-lit background. Have the court's technical support number ready. Many courts require you to log in 15 minutes early.
- ☐ **Secure Childcare:** Most family courts prohibit children in the courtroom unless they are testifying or the subject of examination. Arrange alternate care. If your children will be discussed, have photos ready but leave children at home.

- Plan Travel & Parking: Arrive 30-45 minutes early to clear security (which can take 20+ minutes in major metro courts), locate your courtroom, and review your materials. Research parking in advance—courthouse parking fills quickly. For remote hearings, log in 15 minutes early to troubleshoot technical issues.

## 2. Evidence & Document Preparation (Critical for Pro Se Litigants)

*Judges rule based on evidence, not emotion. Organized documentation is your most powerful tool.*

- The 'Rule of Three' for Physical Copies: Bring three complete sets of every exhibit, declaration, and supporting document—one for the judge, one for opposing counsel/party, and one for yourself. Use binder clips or labeled folders for each set. Tab or highlight key sections. If appearing remotely, email all exhibits to the court clerk 24 hours in advance per local rules.
- ThreadLock Case Summary Export: If you've been using ThreadLock to document incidents, communications, and evidence, print your organized timeline summary or case report. This becomes your 'cheat sheet' during testimony: a chronological reference you can quickly consult when questioned about dates, times, or specific events. Mark key entries with sticky tabs.
- Certified Originals Ready: Have original copies of birth certificates, marriage certificates, signed custody agreements, court orders, medical records, or financial documents. Some judges require originals for authentication. Keep these separate from exhibit copies.
- Rebuttal Notes Preparation: Bring a clean legal pad and working pen. As you listen to the opposing party's testimony, write down factual inaccuracies you can address with evidence. Don't interrupt but be ready to present contradicting documentation when it's your turn.
- Digital Backup Access: Save all documents to a USB drive or cloud storage accessible from your phone. Courts occasionally request electronic copies. Ensure your phone is fully charged with a backup battery or charger cable.

## 3. Evidence Review & Legal Strategy

- Re-Read Opposing Party's Filings: Review every declaration, motion, and response filed by the other side in the past 72 hours. Note factual misstatements, exaggerations, or unsupported claims. Prepare specific evidence to refute each

one (e.g., 'They claim I missed 5 exchanges, but I have confirmation of attendance for 4 of those 5 dates').

- ❑ **Clarify Your Requested Relief:** Be ready to articulate exactly what you want the judge to order. Vague requests fail. Instead of 'fair custody,' state: 'I am requesting modification of Section 3.2 of the parenting plan to provide equal 2-2-5-5 custody instead of every-other-weekend visits' or 'I request imputation of income at \$75,000 annually for child support calculation purposes under [State] guidelines.'
- ❑ **Anticipate Cross-Examination:** If the opposing party or their attorney will question you, identify your 3-4 weakest points and prepare honest, brief responses. Practice answering questions calmly without defensiveness. Example: If asked about a past CPS report, acknowledge it, explain the outcome, and provide documentation showing case closure.
- ❑ **Know Applicable Statutes & Standards:** For custody matters, research your state's 'best interest of the child' factors. For support modifications, understand substantial change in circumstances requirements. For domestic violence restraining orders, know the burden of proof. Briefly reference these standards when making your argument.
- ❑ **Identify Your Witnesses (If Any):** If you have witnesses appearing, confirm they know the hearing time and format. Provide them with copies of relevant exhibits. Brief them on what questions you'll ask—never surprise your own witness.

## 4. Personal & Professional Readiness

- ❑ **Court-Appropriate Attire:** Dress as you would for a job interview. Business casual minimum, no jeans, shorts, tank tops, or clothing with logos/slogans. Judges notice presentation. Avoid excessive jewelry or strong fragrances. For remote hearings, dress professionally from the waist up minimum (but preferably fully, in case you need to stand).
- ❑ **Hydration & Nutrition:** Eat a substantial meal 2-3 hours before your hearing. Bring a water bottle (most courts allow sealed beverages). Court sessions frequently run 1-2 hours over schedule and low blood sugar impairs decision-making and emotional regulation. Pack a protein bar or snack in your bag.
- ❑ **Emotional Preparation:** Family court hearings are emotionally challenging. Identify one trusted person you can text or call immediately after for support. Practice slow breathing techniques. Remember: your job is to present facts clearly, not to 'win' an argument with your ex-partner in front of the judge.

- ☐ Phone Etiquette: Silence your phone completely (not just vibrate, courtrooms are quiet). Save the court's phone number if it's a remote hearing. Have a backup device ready in case of technical failure.
- ☐ Arrive With Time to Spare: Use the extra 20-30 minutes to find a quiet space (hallway bench, empty courtroom, your car) to review your notes one final time and center yourself mentally.

## 5. Courtroom Conduct & Communication Tips

- ☐ Address the Judge Properly: 'Your Honor' for every response. Stand when the judge enters or exits. Never interrupt the judge mid-sentence.
  - ☐ Speak Directly to the Judge, Not Your Ex: Even when opposing counsel or your co-parent makes inflammatory statements, direct all responses to the judge. Example: 'Your Honor, that statement is inaccurate. My records show...' vs. arguing directly with the other party.
  - ☐ Answer Only What's Asked: Keep responses concise and factual. Over-explaining makes you appear defensive. If asked a yes/no question, answer yes or no, then briefly explain only if necessary.
  - ☐ Control Your Body Language: Maintain neutral facial expressions even when you disagree with testimony. Visible frustration, eye-rolling, or head-shaking damages your credibility. Take notes instead.
  - ☐ If You Don't Understand: Ask for clarification. 'Your Honor, I don't understand the question. Could you please rephrase?' is far better than guessing at an answer.
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## Why ThreadLock Matters for Family Court Preparation

ThreadLock is the evidence organization platform designed specifically for pro se litigants and parties in family law cases. Whether you're navigating divorce, child custody disputes, child support modifications, or domestic violence proceedings (with or without an attorney), ThreadLock helps you:

- ☐ Create attorney-ready timelines of incidents, communications, and parenting time violations
- ☐ Organize text messages, emails, photos, and documents by category and date



- ☐ Track patterns of behavior with tagged entries (missed exchanges, communication refusals, concerning incidents)
- ☐ Generate court-ready reports and exhibits in minutes instead of days
- ☐ Reduce legal bills by providing attorneys with pre-organized documentation

***The parent who wins custody isn't always the 'better' parent. But they're usually the parent with better documentation. ThreadLock makes that possible for everyone.***

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## ThreadLock.ai

*Document. Organize. Prepare. Prevail.*

Family Law Evidence Management for Pro Se Litigants & Represented Parties

*Keywords: family court preparation, custody hearing checklist, divorce court readiness, pro se litigation tools, self-represented litigant resources, child custody evidence organization, family law documentation, court hearing preparation, divorce hearing tips, custody modification hearing, restraining order hearing preparation, family court evidence management, legal document organization for court*

