

# Karuk Tribal Court

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## Prepare Your Evidence

One of the most important steps you can take when preparing to go to court is preparing your “evidence.” Evidence is information a party can present in court to prove their case.

Evidence can be in 2 main forms:

### 1. Witness testimony (people):

- The party involved in the lawsuit;
- Other people who have direct and relevant information about the case;
- People who keep relevant records; or
- Experts qualified to give an opinion about some aspect of the case.

Usually, any witnesses must be present in court for the hearing or trial.

### 2. Exhibits (things):

- Documents or objects used to prove your case (or disprove the other side’s);
- Photographs; or
- Records: police records, medical records, bills, appraisals, school records, financial statements, etc.

To prepare your evidence:

- Review all your evidence and sort it and organize it so that, even when you get nervous and rushed, you can find what you are looking for.
- Make sure your witnesses are ready, not just for questions you will ask them but questions the other side may ask.
- Outline questions to ask your witnesses. Make sure you know what your witnesses will say. And, in your outline, make notes about any documents or other evidence you need to ask your witnesses about.
- Outline questions to ask the other side’s witnesses. Try to predict what they will say and be prepared with follow-up questions or documents to ask them about.
- Research and consider likely evidence issues that may come up.

### Researching the rules of evidence

There are rules of evidence that everyone must follow. These rules exist to make sure that the judge gets reliable, relevant, and accurate evidence to consider when making decisions about your case.

Some of the most important rules are:

- Generally, people can only talk about what they know first-hand – what they themselves saw, heard, felt, smelled, or tasted. (There are some exceptions to this rule.)
- The other side has the right to cross-examine anyone whose words (whether written or spoken) are being considered.
- All testimony must be relevant information.