

The Wisconsin court system developed a list of questions to help people without lawyers decide if they should represent themselves. Here are some of those questions and some of our own . . .

If you answer “no” to any one of these questions, we strongly urge you to talk to a lawyer *before* you decide to represent yourself!

- 1. Are you on-time?**
You are expected to come to court hearings on-time. You *cannot* be late or miss a court hearing. If you are late or do not come to a hearing, it will go on without you.
- 2. Do you have reliable transportation?**
There is no excuse to miss a court hearing, even if your car breaks down.
- 3. If you have children, do you have a babysitter?**
You can take children to the courthouse, but you cannot take them into the courtroom with you. Do you have someone who can watch them for you?
- 4. Can you come to the courthouse during working hours?**
The court operates from 8-noon and 1-5, Monday - Friday. Will it put your job at risk if you have to come to court during working hours?
- 5. Can you fill-out complicated forms without help?**
Even if you use a court form, you still have to read instructions and follow all the required steps. Court staff are not allowed to fill-out the forms for you; they cannot answer legal questions about your case.
- 6. Can you stand up and speak to the judge at a hearing?**
Does it scare you to think you have to stand up in front of the judge at a hearing? Do you know what to say to the judge? The judge cannot help you; you must speak to the judge on your own.
- 7. Do you and the other party get along?**
Being your own attorney means you have to interact with the other party. Can you do this? If you and the other party had an abusive relationship, interacting with them may be impossible for you *but* that does not excuse you from having to follow the rules. A lawyer acts as a buffer between you and the other party.
- 8. Speaking of rules, do you get angry when someone tells you what to do?**
The laws and rules you have to follow don't always seem fair or logical. Can you keep your cool when it seems like the system is “against you”?
- 9. Are you impatient or easily frustrated?**
There is no such thing as “judge express”. Talking to a judge, getting an order from the court, is a *process*, and, when you represent yourself, it can be a slow process. If you are in a hurry or if you think your case is an emergency, you will need a lawyer to help you.