



CLASSROOM LAW PROJECT
COURTHOUSE EXPERIENCE TOUR GUIDE HANDBOOK

Courthouse Pre-Tour Procedures

Tips for selecting which courtrooms to visit

1. What should I ask when I call a Judge's Assistant?

- Is this appropriate for students in 5th grade? 8th grade? 10th grade?
- What is this case about?
- What time does the case begin?

2. What if nothing is happening in the courtroom?

- Ask if the judge willing to speak with the students. If so, what time and where?
- Ask if Presiding Judge Nan Waller is available to speak with students.

3. What kinds of cases do other tour guides recommend? Which cases are good to observe when the docket does not appear very exciting? What kinds of cases should I choose if I could not reach the Judge's assistant?

- Landlord/Tenant (especially good for younger students)
- Traffic Court (especially good for high school students)

4. What other suggestions can CLP give me?

- Try to see at least one criminal and one civil trial.
- Keep in mind that a defendant might not show or may need a translator.

Tips for contacting teachers before the tour

1. Guides shall send a confirming email 2-3 weeks before the tour. It will review the itinerary for the day and explain the important rules. Use the Teacher Information Template you may add your own note to personalize it.

Note: It is imperative to contact a teacher who does not respond to your email to make sure they received it.

- The confirming email is designed so that teachers can cut and paste it into a handout to give to chaperones.
- If you also call the teacher directly to confirm their visit, use the email template (page 9) to cover important points.
- Remind the teacher about appropriate attire. No hats, tank tops, or sunglasses. Suits are not required and clean jeans are fine.
- You might ask the teachers what their class is studying and why they are taking this field trip. The response may provide points you can briefly weave into your orientation.

Tips for the organizing the group the day of the tour

1. Arrive at CLP about 45 minutes before your group to have sufficient time to call each courtroom, prepare and photocopy the docket.
2. Be ready to greet the group in the Gus Solomon Courthouse lobby a few minutes before their scheduled arrival time. Direct the group to the 6th floor courtroom as quickly as possible. This is easier if the group arrives already divided in their smaller groups of 8 students and one chaperone.
3. Use the Orientation Outline to tailor your 15-minute orientation. You will provide each chaperone with a copy of the docket and explain which courtrooms groups may visit. Remind them that the docket is only for the Multnomah County Courthouse, Stop #3. Stress to chaperones that they are responsible for the behavior of their group. Explain that chaperones should enter a courtroom first to assess if it is an appropriate time for the group to enter. Groups should not enter during opening or closing statements (when the attorney is speaking directly to the jury).
4. Make sure everyone knows their group assignments, and when and where to meet at the end of the tour.
5. Go over the itinerary for the day and remind groups to stay together as they walk to the courthouses.
6. Remind everyone about going through the metal detectors and why it is important to be prepared so they can quickly pass through them.
7. Ask everyone to turn off his or her cell phone.

Tips for Preparing the Group for the Courthouse Tour

1. The 6th floor courtroom in the Gus Solomon United States Courthouse is an impressive room. However, it looks very different from the courtrooms where the groups will be watching actual trials. It is important to let the groups know about this so they are not surprised when sitting in courtroom that looks very different.
2. Tell the group that it is important to stay quiet in both the courtrooms and the hallways. Emphasize that it is a very important day for the people in the courthouse who are there because of a trial and that it is critical to show respect. Remind everyone that it is ok to talk about what they see when they are away from the courthouse, but not while they are in or around it.
3. Review information about courthouse procedure, attire, and behavior:
 - **All persons entering the court must go through courthouse security**, including metal detectors. No firearms, weapons, or contraband are allowed. Do not make any jokes. The Multnomah County Sheriff takes courthouse security very seriously. Stay clear of jail guards transporting persons to custody.
 - **A Classroom Law Project sticker must be visible on each student's shirt or jacket** (not on pants) to identify them as part of the tour group.

- **Audible devices such as cell phones, pagers, and watches must be silenced before entering a courtroom.** No loud talking or inappropriate behavior (such as clapping or rolling eyes) is permitted. All persons must be treated with courtesy and respect.
- **Eating, drinking, chewing gum, or other distracting or disruptive behavior is not permitted.** Look for signs with special instructions. It is ok to enter if the sign says "Witnesses Excluded," but do not enter if it says "No Student Tours" or "Proceedings Sealed." Please remain quiet (even if others are talking) and be as inconspicuous as possible. Sit close to the door and exit at a natural break in the trial.
- **Do not talk about the court proceedings in the hallways or on the sidewalks surrounding the Courthouse.** Jurors, parties to the case, witnesses, and lawyers involved in the cases may be within hearing distance. It is particularly important that jurors not be tainted by comments.
- **Be respectful.** Judges are to be addressed as "Your Honor" and you must stand up when a judge enters and stay until he or she says, "be seated." Stay seated if the jury is being moved in and out of the courtroom. Dockets listing the cases before the court are posted outside each courtroom entrance.
- **Use stairs whenever possible** (elevators are small and slow).