

# What to Expect When You Go to Downing Centre Court

Going to court can be an intimidating experience, particularly if you have never been to one before. Knowing what to expect before you walk in the door can help alleviate some of your worries, and make you feel more confident during what is for most people an upsetting and stressful time in their lives. Whether you go to a large court like [Downing Centre Court](#), or a smaller regional courthouse, the procedure is much the same.

Downing Centre Court is both a local and district court, which means that it deals with less serious matters, and with complex criminal trials. Cases can be presided over by a magistrate or judge if it's a local court matter, or a judge and jury if the matter is before the district court.

## **When you arrive**

Downing Centre Court, like many other courthouses, has a number of different courtrooms. Make sure you arrive early, so you have time to find where you need to be without having to rush. A list of courtrooms and cases that are being heard should be in the foyer. When you arrive at the court complex, the first thing you will need to do is check which courtroom your case is being heard in, and make your way there.

Once you arrive at the right courtroom, there will be a court officer who will generally be identifiable by a badge or uniform. You will need to let them know you are there, and they might ask you a number of questions about your case. Once you have spoken to them, they will probably tell you to sit and wait until it is your turn.

## **In the courtroom**

You will be called in to the courtroom when it is your turn. A

number of other people will be in the room, including the judge or magistrate, the prosecuting lawyer and your lawyer if you have one. Depending on the nature and severity of the case there might be other people present, such as members of the public or journalists.

Once you are before the court, you will need to let the judge or magistrate know whether you want to [plead guilty or not guilty](#). Make sure you stand up when you address the judge or magistrate – there will generally be a microphone to speak into. If you decide to plead guilty, the matter will probably be finalised that day unless it is highly complex or serious in nature.

If you choose to plead not guilty, the court will be adjourned, and you will be given a later date to have the matter heard. This is to give you and the prosecution both time to prepare your cases, and gather any evidence you might need. If you are unsure whether to plead guilty or not guilty, it is best to speak to a lawyer beforehand as how you plead on your first court appearance can make a big difference to the outcome of your case.

Although visiting a court house such as Downing Centre Court can be nerve wracking, it is best to try to stay as calm as possible. If a lawyer is representing you, they can help to guide you through the process and alleviate any of your concerns, as well as help you get the most positive outcome possible from your court hearing.