

Courtroom Etiquette, Persuasive Advocacy & Oral Submissions

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1. Introduction

1.1 Meaning & Purpose

- Courtroom etiquette and advocacy refer to the behaviour, manner, discipline, and communication skills expected from anyone appearing before a court.
- This includes how you dress, how you speak, how you structure your arguments, and how you interact with judges and opposing counsel.

The purpose is simple:

A lawyer who presents themselves well instantly earns credibility, even before they begin arguing.

Good etiquette ensures the courtroom runs smoothly, while strong advocacy ensures your legal points land effectively.

Advocacy = Ability to Persuade

Etiquette = Respect for the court

1.2 Why Students Must Know This Early

Law students often enter internships or moots without understanding courtroom behaviour, which leads to awkward or avoidable mistakes such as interrupting the judge, speaking too fast, fumbling with files, or using casual language.

Learning this early helps because:

1. It prepares you for real court exposure
 2. It builds professional habits
 3. It reduces anxiety
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2. Courtroom Etiquette

2.1 Appearance & Dress Code

- Advocates are expected to dress in a manner that reflects the seriousness of the judicial system.
- Black and white is the standard for advocates for a reason, as it symbolises neutrality and discipline

2.2 Punctuality & Court Conduct

- Being early shows reliability. If you are not present when your matter is called, the judge may dismiss it or pass an adverse order.
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2.3 Helps review the cause list, settle documents

- Coming early gives you time to check where your case appears on the cause list, understand the sequence of matters, and coordinate with the clerk/senior.
- You also get time to arrange your documents, so you're not shuffling papers in front of the judge, which looks unprofessional.

2.4 Basic Protocol: Standing when the judge enters, sitting only with permission

- When the judge enters the courtroom, everyone stands as a sign of respect for the institution, not just the individual judge.
 - This small gesture reflects an understanding of courtroom discipline and shows that you recognise the authority and solemnity of judicial proceedings.
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2.5 Addressing the Bench

1. High Courts/Supreme Court → “Your Lordship(s)”

- In appellate courts, the traditional and widely accepted address is “Your Lordship” or “My Lords.”

2. District Courts → “Your Honour”

- It sets a respectful tone and reflects familiarity with the judicial hierarchy.

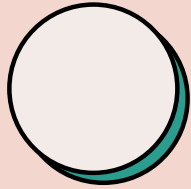
3. Never “Sir/Madam”

- Terms like “Sir” or “Madam” are considered too casual and are not meant for judicial settings.
 - They reduce the bench to a personal identity rather than acknowledging its institutional character
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3. Persuasive Advocacy

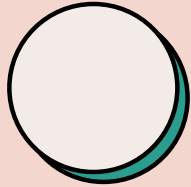
- Persuasive advocacy is the art of convincing the court through a combination of clear reasoning, credible presentation, and respectful courtroom behaviour.
 - It focuses on how you argue, not just what you argue.
 - Effective persuasion allows your arguments to resonate with the court by presenting them in a manner that is clear, balanced, and respectful.
 - It helps the judge understand not only the legal basis of your case but also why your reasoning is fair, practical, and worthy of acceptance.
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It Involves



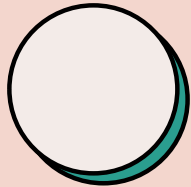
Presenting facts and law logically

You guide the court step-by-step so the judge naturally reaches the conclusion you want.



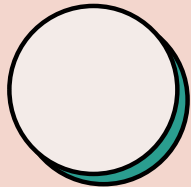
Framing your arguments effectively

You choose the strongest issues, anticipate objections, and address weaknesses.



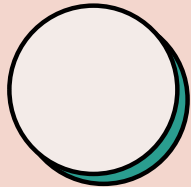
Communicating with confidence and clarity

Your tone, pace, body language, and structure influence how persuasive you sound.



Assisting the court

Judges appreciate advocates who make the case easier to understand, not more complicated.



Using authorities strategically

Strategic citation sharpens your argument and demonstrates an understanding of the hierarchy and weight of precedents.

3.1 Elements of Persuasion-

- Persuasion is not just about what you argue; it's also about how you present your argument. Effective advocacy combines structure, logic, and delivery, allowing your audience, the court, to clearly understand, trust, and accept your points.
 - Equally important is credibility, how the court perceives your reliability and honesty. Even the strongest arguments can lose impact if the advocate does not inspire trust through clear communication, acknowledgement of limitations, and consistent, fact-based reasoning."
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Structure

Begin with a roadmap

Start by outlining the key points you will cover. This gives the court a preview of your argument and sets expectations.

Step-by-step flow

Present your arguments in a logical order. Jumping randomly between points can confuse the audience and weaken your case.

Clarity and organisation

A well-structured argument signals preparation and professionalism, making it easier for the court to follow and remember your points.

Logic

Clear progression

Each point should naturally lead to the next. This prevents gaps in reasoning and ensures your argument builds momentum.

Support with evidence

Back your points with facts, case law, or examples. Logical sequencing strengthens the persuasiveness of your claims.

Consistency

Avoid contradictions. Logical consistency makes it difficult for opponents to undermine your argument.

Delivery

Controlled pace

Speak calmly, avoiding rushing or dragging. A steady pace helps the court absorb your argument.

Confidence without aggression

Assert your points firmly but respectfully. Confidence inspires trust and authority.

Non-verbal cues

Tone, posture, eye contact, and gestures reinforce your words. Effective delivery engages the audience and enhances credibility.

Do's & Don'ts in Court

Do's

Be concise: Get to the point quickly; judges appreciate clarity.

Be respectful: Maintain professional tone, address the court properly, and follow decorum.

Be prepared: Know your facts, case laws, and statutes before you rise to speak.

Don'ts'

Don't interrupt: Never speak over the judge or opposing counsel—it reflects poorly and harms your credibility.

Don't argue unnecessarily with opposite counsel: Keep it professional; address the court, not the lawyer.

Don't be dramatic: Avoid exaggerated emotions or theatrics; persuasion works through logic, not performance.

THANK YOU