

Instructions for Children

Court Education for children should include the following instructions:

- If a lawyer uses a big word and you don't know what it is, don't guess. Tell the lawyer you don't understand. Practice this with children by using big words and have them ask for clarification.
- If your lawyer asks you a question and the other lawyer says, "Objection!" don't say anything. The lawyers will talk to the judge. Sometimes they look angry, but they are not mad at you.
- If you get confused or tired or scared, raise your hand and say you need to stop for a minute. You can say you need a glass of water, or need to go to the bathroom, or need a stretch break. It is okay to ask for as many breaks as you need. Have the child practice with you asking for a break.
- If someone asks you the same question over and over again, this does not mean that your first answer was wrong. One thing that happens in court is that lawyers ask the same question lots of times. Practice repeating questions with the child to get them used to this.
- If you make a mistake, it is all right to correct it in court. The most important thing is to tell the truth, so if you said something by mistake, correct it.
- If there is someone in the courtroom who frightens you in any way, ask for a break and tell someone such as the prosecutor or victim advocate. (Defendants and friends of the defendant may attempt control cueing of a child by means of intimidating looks or gestures, and children should be protected from this coercion.)

Note: When practicing with children do not use information from the actual case – use non-case based material.