
Introduction

While proceedings before the Tribunal Magistrates at the Small Claims Tribunals are informal and simple, they are court proceedings. This guide is to help you better prepare for a hearing before a Tribunal Magistrate. It provides useful pointers and is not meant to be exhaustive of the many situations that may arise in the course of the hearing before a Tribunal Magistrate.

A APPROACH

Be Prepared

Be prepared to present your case fully. Due to the limited time set aside for the hearing, please:

- be direct;
- be brief;
- do NOT repeat, where possible;
- Ensure all supporting documents have been uploaded in CJTS by submitting an e-service for “submit supporting documents”
- bring all original documents with copies for the Tribunal Magistrate as well as the other party;
- bring a CD or DVD player and the necessary equipment, e.g. screen, speakers, etc., if you wish to submit audio or video evidence in the form of a CD or DVD as the Tribunal Magistrate may require it to be played during the hearing.

- You may wish to submit a “Submissions for Hearing” e-service to allow you to note the events leading to the dispute in chronological order. If both parties to the claim submit this e-service, the document will be available to both parties to view. Otherwise, only the party that submitted the document and the Tribunal Magistrate hearing the matter will be able to view it.

Be Punctual

Do allow yourself sufficient time to reach the Tribunals on time. When you arrive, take a queue number at the Q kiosk located at the Tribunals and wait for your number to be called by the Tribunal Magistrate in chambers. Do note the time and date for the hearing.

Be Realistic in Your Expectations

The hearing before the Tribunal Magistrate is a court hearing. This means that one party may win and the other party may lose. This differs from the earlier consultation before the Registrar or Assistant Registrar which seeks to find a win-win solution to amicably resolve the claim, without a hearing by the Tribunal Magistrate. Filing a claim does not guarantee that the party will win or recover the full amount claimed. The Tribunal Magistrate will decide on the merits of the case, in accordance with the law, after hearing the evidence and explanations of the parties.

B BEHAVIOUR

Be Polite

At all times, please be polite to the Tribunal Magistrate, officers of the Tribunals and the other party.

Do Not be in Contempt of Court

During proceedings before the Tribunals, do not:

- assault, insult or obstruct a Tribunal Magistrate, officer of the Tribunals, witness, other party or any other person;
- interrupt or misbehave;
- disobey an order or direction of the Tribunal Magistrate

- making audio or video recordings

By committing any of the above acts, you may commit a Contempt of Court, which is an offence under the Administration of Justice (Protection) Act.

When Presenting Your Case

Speak slowly and clearly, so that the Tribunal Magistrate can record the evidence.

Do not interrupt anyone, especially the Tribunal Magistrate.

Present your points and do not repeat unnecessarily. Repeating your points does not make your case stronger.

If you disagree with a point raised when the other party is presenting, make a note and request the Tribunal Magistrate to allow you to state your reason for disagreement, after the other party has finished presenting his case.

Be Respectful

When it is not your turn to speak, do not talk or pass comments. Avoid making annoying actions, facial expressions and gestures.

When the Tribunal Magistrate asks a question, it is usually to find out more about the case to make a more informed decision. Answer these questions to the point.

Be attentive and conduct yourself in a respectful way.

Court Attire

Please avoid wearing slippers, shorts (of any length), singlets and any revealing outfits, as these are inappropriate attire for court.

C CONTROL

No Recording

Video, audio and/or image recordings of any hearing are strictly prohibited. Additionally, any communication with external parties via mobile phone or other means is strictly prohibited without the prior approval of the Tribunal Magistrate.

Do Listen to the Tribunal Magistrate

The Tribunal Magistrate is appointed by the President of Singapore to hear claims at the Tribunals and will decide on the claims, based on the merits of each case.

The Tribunal Magistrate is in charge of the proceedings. Please comply with all the directions of the Tribunal Magistrate.

Do Know the Relevance of the Evidence Tendered

The Tribunal Magistrate will decide on the relevance of the evidence tendered based on the facts in each case. The Tribunal Magistrate may prevent the parties from presenting irrelevant evidence.

Be Considerate

Be considerate at all times. Do manage any negative feelings to avoid unpleasantness. The court room is a chance to resolve the matter with civility. Please exercise mutual respect and courtesy at all times.

Respect the decision of the Tribunal Magistrate

At the end of the hearing, even if the decision is not in your favour, you should respect the decision that

was made. You may file an appeal to the High Court, with permission from the District Judge. Please note that the application for leave to appeal must be submitted **within 14 days from the date of the Order of Tribunal via e-service in CJTS.** You may approach the officers of the Tribunals for information on the appeal process. If you are uncertain if you have good grounds to appeal a decision, you may wish to seek legal advice.

You may also approach the Community Justice Centre which is located in the State Courts Building for informational assistance. For free legal advice you may wish to obtain a list of free legal clinics at www.pa.gov.sg. Alternatively, you may wish to visit the Pro Bono website at www.probono.lawsociety.org.sg or the Pro Bono offices at the State Courts.



Small Claims Tribunals

ABCs of Hearings Before a Tribunal Magistrate

- Approach
 - Behaviour
 - Control
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