

**PICKENS COUNTY MASTER-IN-EQUITY**  
**SRL (SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANT) LETTER**

This letter is being given to you by our court because you are not a lawyer (SRL means self-represented litigant) and you are representing yourself in your case. Under South Carolina rules, you are held to the same standard of compliance and understanding of rules and procedures as an attorney. The Judge and the judge's staff cannot help you in litigating your case. The clerk of court cannot help you, other than to provide scheduling information. Please try to have an attorney advise you if you can hire an attorney.

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

1. The judge and staff cannot communicate with you without all parties being present. Phone calls, emails, faxes, etc., will not be accepted without all parties being present or copied.
2. Do not file or send any documents to this court. All documents must be filed with the clerk of court; then send a copy to all parties/attorneys and the court.
3. Make sure the clerk of court and the opposing attorney have your proper mailing address so notices of hearings, motions, pre-trial conferences, trials, etc., can be sent to you.
4. Neither the judge, judge's staff, nor the clerk or staff, can give you legal advice.
5. When you receive a notice study it ahead of time to find out where you are supposed to be and when.
6. A husband cannot represent his wife or vice-versa. **A corporation must be represented by an attorney.** A non-attorney cannot represent anyone in court.
7. The person filing the lawsuit has the burden to prove the claim.
8. If you decide to look for a lawyer, the South Carolina Bar has a referral service you can call.
9. Each side can serve the other with discovery requests, such as Request to Admit, Interrogatories, Deposition Notice, Request to Produce, etc. Be warned that each of these items has a significant legal impact on your case. You must know the rules and respond properly.

**THE DAY OF YOUR HEARING**

1. Study your notice carefully to determine the purpose of the hearing/trial. If a party has filed a motion, it is normally set for a hearing. Arrive about fifteen (15) minutes early to locate the courtroom where your hearing will be held. You can check with the Clerk of Court or ask the Bailiff or deputies for directions to your courtroom.
2. Dress appropriately for court. Do not wear shorts, hats, sunglasses, etc. in the courtroom.
3. Turn off or silence your telephone before you enter the courtroom.

4. When you enter the courtroom, sit in the audience section until your case is called.
5. If you plan to introduce exhibits, bring copies for the judge and all lawyers involved in the case.
6. More than one hearing/trial may be scheduled that day. You may have to wait until yours is called.
7. Once your case is called, come to the front and sit at one of the two tables facing the judge.
8. Remain standing until the judge authorizes you to sit.
9. There will normally be a court reporter taking the testimony. Only one person should talk at a time so the reporter can accurately record what is spoken. You will be sworn before you can testify at a trial.
10. When asked, please give the court reporter your full name.
11. Speak clearly and loud enough for the court reporter to hear what you say. Do not use slang terms such as “yeah”, or “un-uh” because the court reporter and judge may have trouble interpreting what you meant.
12. Each party will have an opportunity to speak and ask questions. Please be polite; the court will be and will expect the same from you. If the judge interrupts you while you are speaking, it is likely that the judge either needs a point explained or the matter has already been covered or is not legally relevant to the dispute.
13. The purpose of the hearing is for the judge to hear from the parties who have an interest in the case. The judge will advise if testimony is allowed. If it is a hearing/trial, no testimony is generally allowed. If it is a trial, you will be able to testify and call witnesses.
14. The judge will explain what matter is being heard and how the hearing/trial will be conducted.
15. The judge will alert you when it is your turn to present evidence or cross-examine witnesses. If an objection is made to evidence or testimony, please remember to have only one person talking at the same time. The judge will let each side argue the objection before ruling on the objection.
16. At the end of the hearing or trial, the judge will either issue a verbal ruling and ask the winning party to draft a proposed Order or the judge will ask each party to submit written memos about the law and facts of the hearing/trial.
17. The judge is bound to issue an Order based on the evidence and the law of the case, not on other comments the parties may make.
18. You have a right to appeal Orders to our S.C. Appellate Courts. Attention is invited to the S.C. Appellate Rules for time frames and requirements.