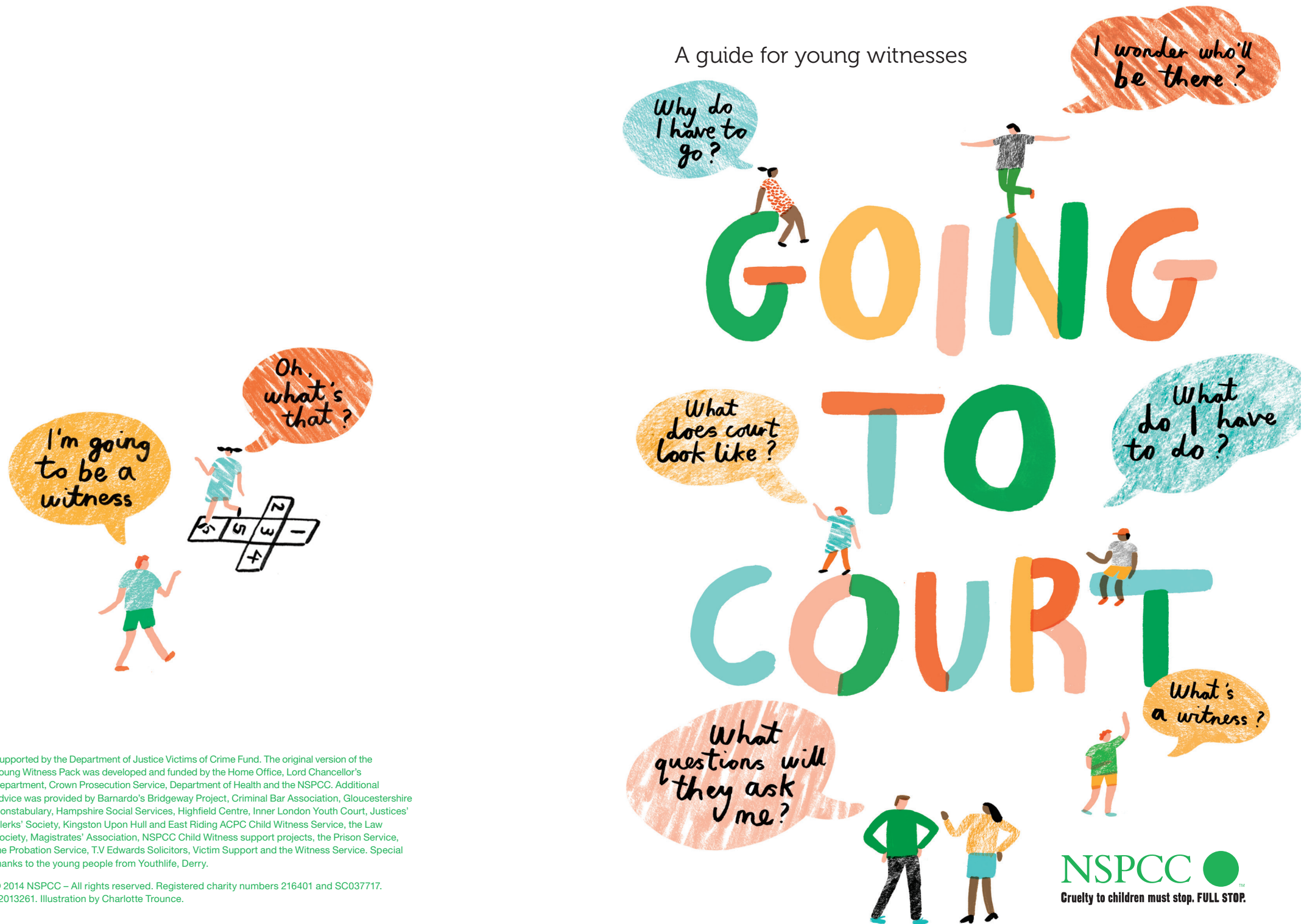


A guide for young witnesses



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Everything you need to know before you go to court. What you'll do, where you'll go, and who you'll meet.

Advice on what happens
on your day as a witness.
What you can take, where
you'll sit, and how to answer
questions with confidence.

You've done your job, but what happens next? This section explains how the judge and jury come to a decision, how this might affect you, and where to go for more support.

All those strange words and technical terms broken down in a way that's easy to understand.

Got some spare time in court?
Why not give these games a go.

We'll help you understand what happens before, during and after you've been to court. We'll explain who you'll meet, what you'll see and what to expect.

If you've still got questions you can always talk to your young witness volunteer – they'll be happy to help.



Being a witness probably feels like quite a big thing at the moment. But the more you know about what it means, and how you can get ready for being a witness, the easier it will be.

PREPARING FOR COURT

What's a witness?

Why do we need to go to court?

Who will I meet there?

What's a witness?

A witness is simply someone who has seen or heard something. We witness things every day.

If someone breaks the law, a court has to decide what should be done about it. To help make that decision they need to know what really happened. That's why they need to talk to witnesses.

You might be thinking: "But I don't know what happened, exactly."

That's OK. What you saw is just one piece of the puzzle. But you're not the only witness. The court will talk to other people who saw what happened. Each of these witnesses holds a different piece of the puzzle. The court puts all those pieces together, and works out what happened and what to do next.



Why do we need to go to court?

Courts help to make sure people are treated fairly. If someone is a victim of a crime, it's only fair that the person who broke the law is punished.

But the court also has to make sure that the person who is accused of breaking the law is treated fairly.

Imagine if someone accuses you of doing something wrong. Just because they say you did it, doesn't mean you did. You need the chance to give your side of the story.

This is what happens in court. If someone's accused of breaking the law, the court treats them fairly and lets them tell their side of the story. The judge and jury listen to what everyone else has to say, before deciding what should happen.

This is called a 'fair trial' (it's where the saying "innocent until proven guilty" comes from). It's a really important part of our society.

Why do I have to go to court?

You're a witness because you saw something that will help the court make decisions that are fair for everyone.

By going to court to tell people the truth about what you know and what you saw, you're helping everyone come to the right decision. Even if you feel you didn't see much at all, what you say could make a big difference. You could hold that vital missing clue.

Whatever you can tell the court, no matter how big or small it might seem to you, will be important.

What's it like in court?

You might want to go to the courtroom before the trial starts. This can be arranged very easily – just ask your young witness volunteer. As a young witness, having a really good look around when the courtroom is empty is a good idea because:

1. you get to see the building, and what it's like
2. you can see where you will go to tell the jury what you saw
3. you can ask questions about what will happen on the day.



DID YOU KNOW?

There are three different types of court: crown court, magistrates' court and youth court. You can find out more about them in the glossary at the back of this book.

You'll find other words in there that are used in court.



Who's who?

There are lots of different people at court. They have different jobs but they're all there to help to find out the truth.

There will be other **witnesses**, like you. They will tell the court what they saw.

The **defendant** is the person who may have broken the law. The defendant isn't allowed to speak to any witnesses.

The **jury** is a group of people who listen to you and the other witnesses. Together, they decide whether or not they think the defendant broke the law.

Their decision – whether the person is 'guilty' or 'not guilty' – is called the 'verdict'.

The **judge** listens carefully to what each person says, then decides what to do about it. If the jury decides the defendant is guilty, it's the judge who decides what punishment they receive.



The **defence lawyer** helps the defendant. They have to tell the court what the defendant says happened.

The **prosecutor** has to tell the court about how the defendant may have broken the law.

There are **resource staff**, who make sure that the court is a safe place to be. They will make sure that the defendant doesn't come near you or speak to you.

The **court staff** will help you find your way around. They will also come and tell you when it's your turn to talk.



DID YOU KNOW?

People in court sometimes wear traditional dress. The judge and lawyers might wear special robes or wigs. It's just a kind of uniform like a policeman or nurse might wear. Some judge's wigs are very old and made from horsehair!



The day has finally arrived. Just remember – you're going to court to tell people what you saw. There are lots of things the court can do to make you feel more comfortable.

This section gives you ideas on what to take with you, what will happen on the day and some tips on listening and answering.

ON THE DAY

Will I have to take the oath?

What if I can't answer the questions?

What can I take to court?

When's the big day?

There are times when you're a witness but never even have to go to court. It all depends on whether or not the defendant admits they've broken the law.

If they admit it by saying they are 'guilty', the court doesn't have to spend time working it out. The judge can simply decide what happens next, and what kind of punishment the defendant should receive.

However, if the defendant says they didn't do it (not guilty), the court will have to decide what happened. The best way for the court to do this is to ask witnesses, including you, what they saw.

GOOD TO KNOW

Whether or not you go to court, being a witness is really important. The statement you gave to police may have helped persuade the defendant to plead guilty.



What will I need to do?

Being a witness is an important job, but you really only need to remember two things:

1. Listen carefully to each question.
2. Then give an honest answer.

That's all there is to it, and it's really, really helpful.

You must always tell the truth in court.
It's the best way to make sure everyone
is treated fairly.

So remember:

- you can use any words you want to explain what happened, even if you think they might be rude
- if you don't know something, it's OK to say so
- don't worry about upsetting anyone – telling the truth and not hiding anything is the best thing to do.



What can I take to court?

Once you arrive at court, there can be a lot of waiting around. It's a good idea to bring some things with you to keep yourself busy. Whether it's a mobile, a book, a magazine, or a pack of cards – it will be good to have something that helps you feel more comfortable.



What do I do when I arrive at court?

When you arrive, you might find that all you have to do at first is hang out in a waiting room. The judge and the jury have to listen to lots of different people, including other witnesses. So when you get there, take the chance to have a break and relax.

Where will I wait?

There will be a safe, quiet and comfortable place for you to wait. You may have a few visitors while you're there. The prosecutor and defence lawyer might come along and talk to you.

When it's your turn to talk, the court staff will come and tell you. They will show you where to go.



Will I need to take the oath?

If you're 14 or over you might be asked to take the oath before you answer questions. This is a way of promising the court that you will tell the truth. A member of the court staff will say a few words, then ask you to repeat them.



Where will I sit in court?

If you have been to visit court already you might know where you're going to sit when you're ready to talk. It's usually one of these:

— in a quiet room with a TV

In some courts you will sit down in front of a TV, where you can see and hear the court. You'll just listen and answer questions through the TV. There will be someone there to help you.

— behind a screen

You might listen and answer questions in the courtroom, but behind a screen. You might do this if you find it easier not to see the defendant in the courtroom.

— in the courtroom

If everyone thinks it's OK, you might answer questions in the courtroom. You don't need to look at the defendant unless you want to. The defendant is not allowed to come near you or ask questions.



GOOD TO KNOW

The court staff are there to help, so if you and the adult you're with need anything – like directions to the toilet or to get some water – it's OK to ask them.



How will I be questioned?

The judge and the jury were not there when the incident happened. They need people like you to explain what you saw.

Remember the two things you need to do in court:

1. Listen carefully to each question.
2. Give an honest answer.

If a video was made when you first talked to the police it may be shown to you in court. You will be asked questions about what you said.

How do I deal with tricky questions?

Some questions might be difficult, perhaps because of the way they're worded or because the court will need to know exactly what you saw or heard. Don't worry. Remember you just have to tell the truth.



— Tips for listening

If some questions are hard to understand, don't worry. It's OK to say, "I don't understand." And it's fine to keep on saying this, even if the question is repeated.

You shouldn't feel bad about this. It's much more important that you understand what's being asked.

If you're asked the same question in a different way, but you still don't understand, that's fine too. Just say, "I'm sorry, but I still don't understand."

If you're asked lots of questions at once, it's also OK to say, "Can you ask me one question at a time, please?"

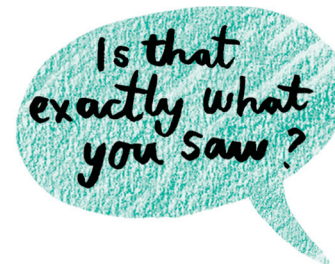
— Tips for answering

When you've heard the question and you're sure you understand it, take your time to answer. Try to think carefully and remember everything.

If you don't know the answer, don't worry – just say, "I don't know."

If you do know the answer, try to speak clearly and loudly – as though you're talking to someone on the other side of the room.

Sometimes it might feel like you're being asked the same question over again. It doesn't mean you gave the wrong answer. Just keep telling the truth, and repeat your answer if you have to.



You might find some things difficult to talk about. So always remember:

- no one will be angry at you for telling the truth, even if it's a secret
- just say what you saw in your own words
- use any words you want – even if they're rude
- if you forget something, or make a mistake, don't worry – just tell the judge.



GOOD TO KNOW

You can ask the judge for help at any time during the trial. Even if you're in the TV room, the judge can always see and hear you when the TV is turned on, even if you can't see the judge on the screen. Tell the judge if:

- you make a mistake or leave something out
- you need a drink, rest or to go to the toilet
- you feel like you need a break.



You have done a really helpful thing by telling the court what you saw.

It will help the court come to a decision about what to do. This section tells you what happens next.

AFTER THE TRIAL

How will the jury make a decision?

What happens next?

Can the defendant contact me?

What happens after I've answered all the questions?

You've told the court what you saw. Thank you, it will have helped everyone get a better idea of what happened. The jury will have listened to you and other witnesses, and will hopefully have enough information to decide whether or not the defendant broke the law.

How does the jury reach a decision?

Once all the witnesses have spoken, the jury goes into a quiet room to talk. They all say what they think about what they heard.

Each person in the jury says whether or not they think the law has been broken. If they agree, they go back to the court to say whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty; this is the verdict.

If you're a witness in a youth or magistrates' court, the magistrate decides the verdict.



What happens if the defendant is guilty?

If the jury gives a guilty verdict, the judge (or magistrate in a youth or magistrates' court) will decide what happens to the defendant. The punishment could be anything from a fine or community service, to time in prison.

There are a few things that help the judge or magistrate decide the punishment, such as how serious the crime was and whether the defendant has committed other crimes in the past. They will also think about the defendant's age, mental health, and what else was happening in their life when the law was broken.

All of this helps the judge come to a decision that's fair for everyone.

What if they're not guilty?

If the jury or magistrate decides the defendant is not guilty, they are usually free to leave.

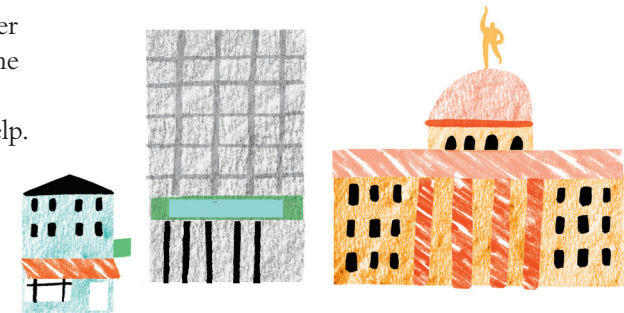
If you have been a witness for the prosecution (which means that you have given evidence against the defendant, because you think they broke the law) hearing that they are 'not guilty' can be difficult. It might make you think that you didn't do a good enough job, or that the jury thought you weren't telling the truth.

It's really important to know that this isn't the case. Remember that the court heard from a lot of witnesses, and they have to think about all of the evidence. Your only job as a witness is to tell the court what *you* saw, you are not responsible for what they decide.

Can the defendant contact me?

No. Whether they are guilty or not, the defendant isn't allowed to contact you. If they really want to, for whatever reason, they have to get permission.

If you do hear from the defendant – in person, or by phone, text, or email – you should call the National Offender Management Service Victim Helpline on 0845 7585 112. Or speak to your young witness volunteer who can help.



You did really well today!

I'm glad I could help the court decide

So, what was court like?

It was fine - not scary at all



Crown court

One of three different kinds of court. Here, a judge is in charge of the trial. Some people wear more formal clothes at crown court, like a special wig and gown.

Defence lawyer

The defence lawyer is there to help the defendant. They tell the court what the defendant says happened.

Defendant

This is the person who may have broken the law. It's up to the court to decide whether they think the defendant did or not.

Evidence

Anything that helps the court find out what really happened is called evidence. It could be something the police found. When witnesses tell the court something it's sometimes known as 'giving evidence'.

Judge

The judge is in charge of a crown court. He listens to what each person says and sometimes writes things down.

Jury

The jury is a group of about 12 people. They listen to you and all the other witnesses. Then they go away for a chat and decide if they think the defendant broke the law.

Magistrates' court

In a magistrates' court, a magistrate is in charge instead of a judge. They don't usually wear the wigs and gowns you would see in crown court.

Registered intermediary

A registered intermediary is someone who can help you understand the questions you are being asked in court. They can also help the court understand your answers if you're not sure how to explain something or what something is called.

Prosecutor

The prosecutor tells the court about how the defendant may have broken the law.

Public Prosecution Service

When the police think someone has broken the law, they tell the Public Prosecution Service. They set up the court case and ask everyone to come to court.

Sentence

If the jury is sure the defendant broke the law, the judge has to decide what to do about it. The judge makes a decision about how the defendant should be punished, like whether or not they should go to prison. The punishment the judge decides is called the sentence.

Trial

When everyone comes to court to find out what happened, this is called a trial. Sometimes it's called a court case – it's the same thing, just another name.

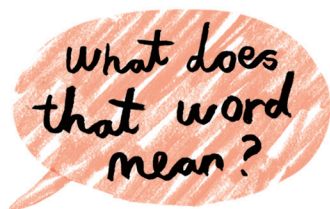
Verdict

This is the decision the jury makes. They go into a room and agree together whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty.

Youth court

If someone under the age of 17 may have broken the law, they would go to a youth court. A magistrate and two other people are in charge.

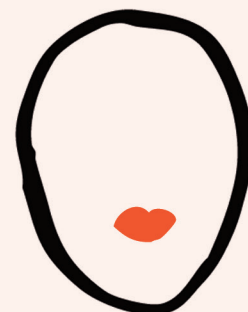
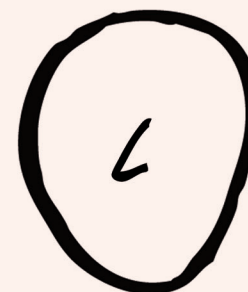
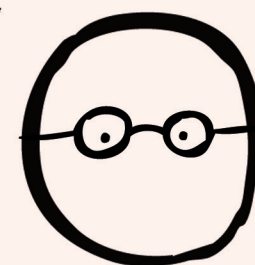
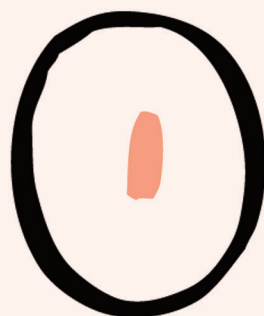
GLOSSARY



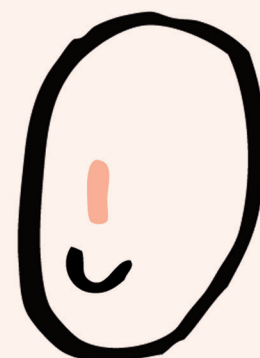
You'll need ...



Draw in the jury!



FREE-TIME
FILLERS



unjumble the words

cnouu rterw _____
 haot _____
 nesntee _____
 vdieecen _____
 djeug _____
 yujr _____
 ictervd _____
 cortropuse _____

1. What is the judge's wig made of?
2. There are three different kinds of court: crown court, youth court, and...
3. True or false? It's OK to ask for questions to be repeated in court.
4. True or false? You can take music and games to play with while you're waiting at court.

Answers: 1. Horsehair 2. Magistrates' court
 3. True – you can ask as many times as you like 4. True

Design the judge
 a new wig!



You could do...

DREADLOCKS



BEEHIVE



MOHICAN



AFRO



QUIFF



COMBOVER

27