

KIDS GO TO COURT



My name is _____

I am going to court because I am a witness.

KIDS GO TO COURT

Written by: Staff in the District Attorney Offices in the State of Alaska who meet with the children who come to court to testify. A special thank you goes to the paralegals who contributed ideas for the content of the book and assisted in the editing process. Nanette Lindsey and Yvonne Willhauck played an important role in getting this project started.

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Courtroom drawing by the Santa Cruz Police Department

Jody Lown, Victim-Witness Program Coordinator, Alaska



Please send ideas or comments regarding this color and activity book by e-mail to Jody_Lown@law.state.ak.us or call 907-465-2760, or write to Department of Law, Criminal Division, Victim-Witness Program, P.O. Box 110300, Juneau, AK . 99811

Hi! If you are going to court for the first time, you probably have lots of questions. People in the District Attorney's Office wrote this book to help you understand about court. It has some pictures to color and some other fun things to do. We hope you like it.

The book answers questions other kids have asked. So let's get started!



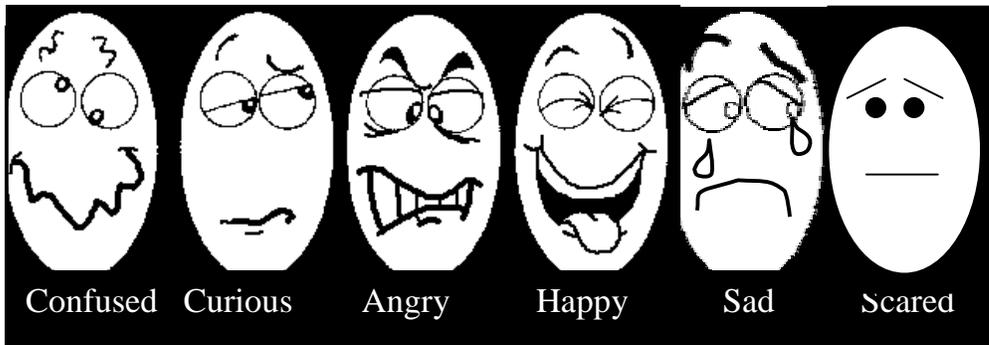
How Are You Feeling?



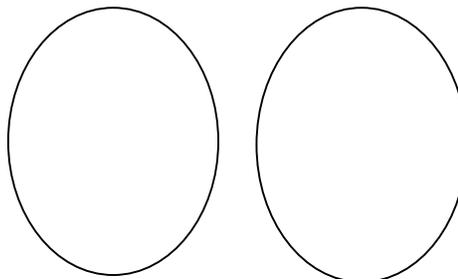
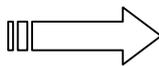
Hi. My name is Mary. Doing new things for the first time can be exciting and sometimes scary. Do you remember how you felt when you first climbed up on the playground equipment?

Lots of kids have been to court and they have had all kinds of different feelings about it. It is okay however you feel.

Here are some of the ways kids have felt about court. Color the face or faces that show how you are feeling.



If none of the faces show how you are feeling, draw how you are feeling.



The Courthouse and Getting to Court

A courthouse is a building where judges work.

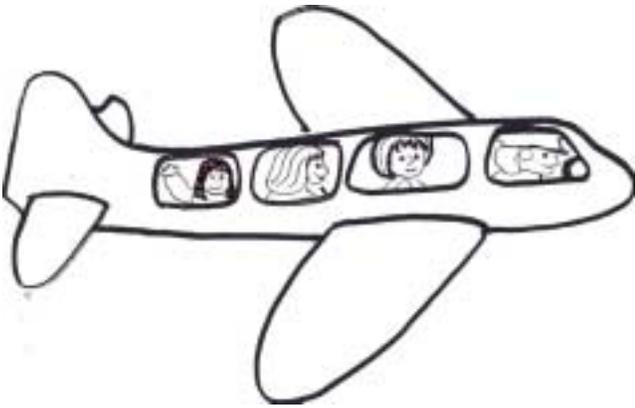
Some communities in Alaska have courthouses and others do not.

Do you know if your community has a courthouse?

Here are some ways kids get to court in Alaska.



In airplanes



On snowmobiles



In cars or trucks

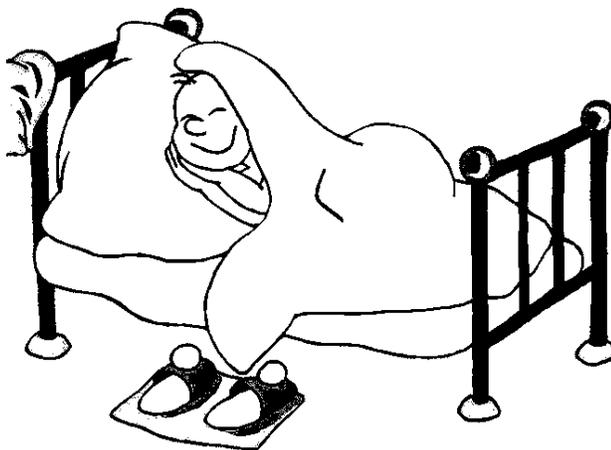


If you live close, by walking



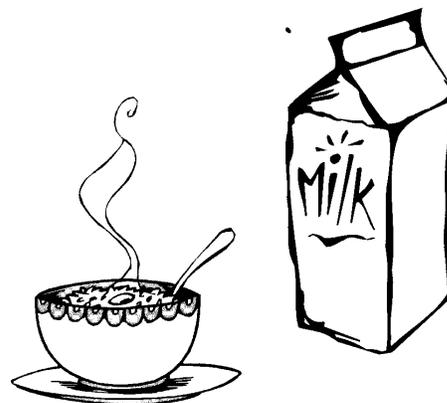
What to Do Before Going to Court

Get a good nights sleep before court so you are rested. Sometimes court takes a long time so you do not want to be tired.



Be sure to dress neat but be comfortable. Maybe you can wear your favorite socks. What color are your favorite socks?

Eat a good breakfast. Bring a snack in case court takes a long time and you get hungry. What is your favorite snack?



Victims of Crime



Hi, my name is Dylan. I am a witness but some people say I am a victim. What does that mean?

You are a victim if a crime happens to you.

You are a witness if you know something about a crime.

If you are a victim, that means you are also a witness.

Meeting With the District Attorney and the Victim-Witness Paralegal

Hi, my name is Joe. Does someone talk to kids before they go into the courtroom to be a witness?



Yes, the attorney and probably a paralegal from the District Attorney's Office will talk with you.

Hi, we are the attorney and the paralegal from the District Attorney's Office. Our job is to know the law and to try to prove in court when someone broke the law. To do that, we ask witnesses to come to court. We have asked you to do that because of something you saw or heard, or because of something that happened to you. Most kids have already talked to the police about what they will be asked in court. Did you talk to the police?



The attorney is also called a prosecutor.

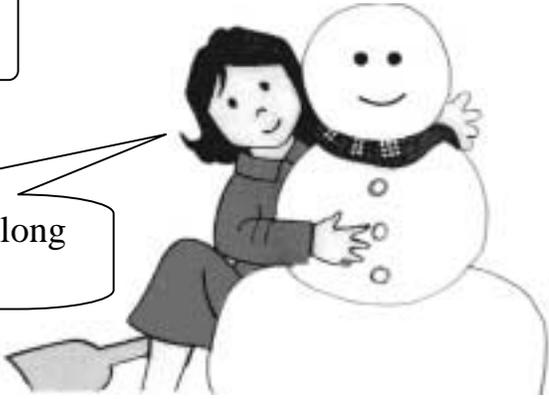
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Do you know the name of the attorney who is asking you to be a witness? _____

Is there a paralegal to talk with you, too? What is her or his name? _____

Waiting to Testify

Hi, my name is Amy. How long will I be at the courthouse?



Sometimes court gets over quickly but most of the time court takes quite a while.

After your meeting with the attorney, you will probably have to wait for a while, so it is a good idea to bring a book or something to do while you wait.

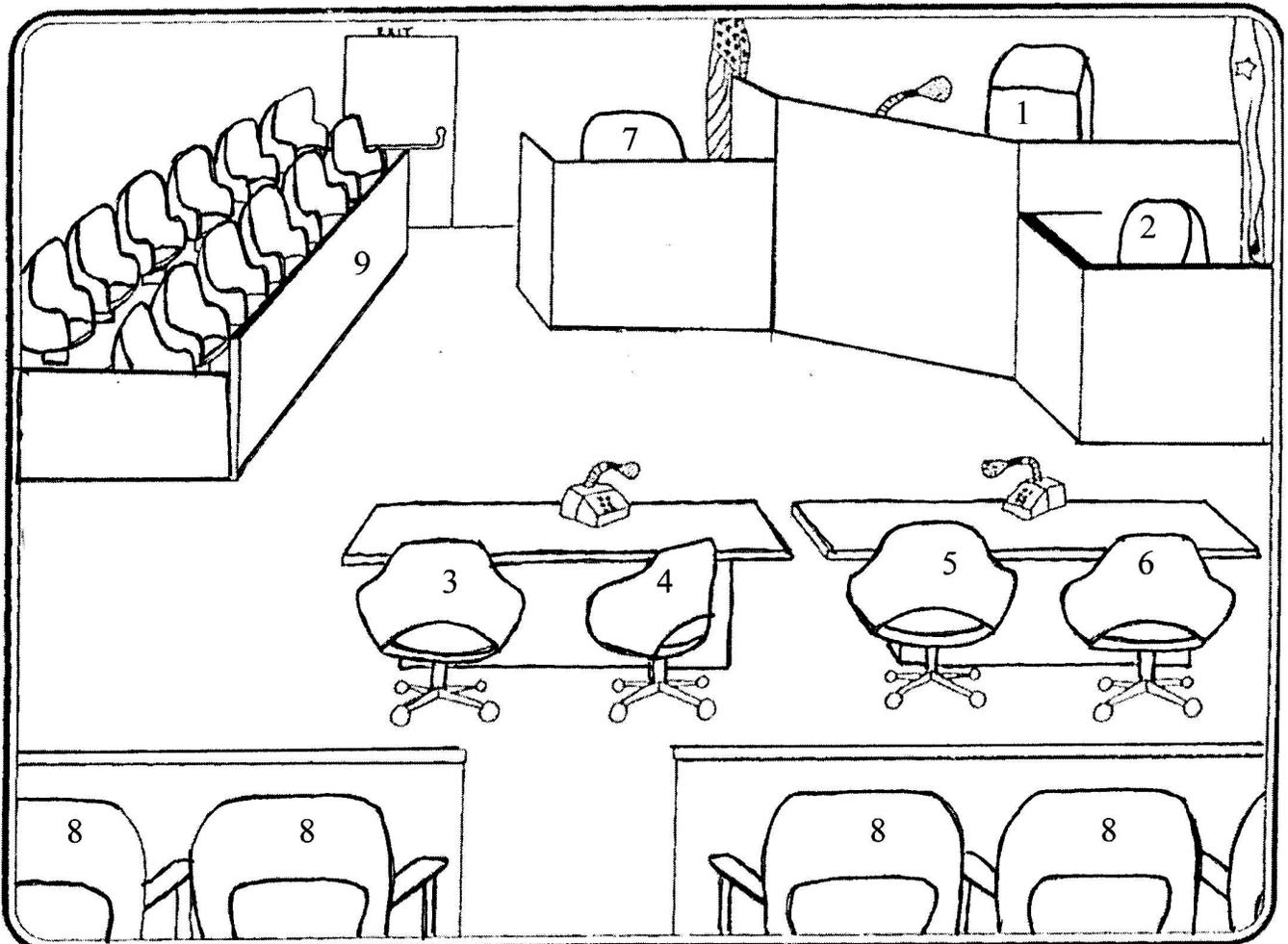


Color these kids who are waiting to testify.

Going Into the Courtroom

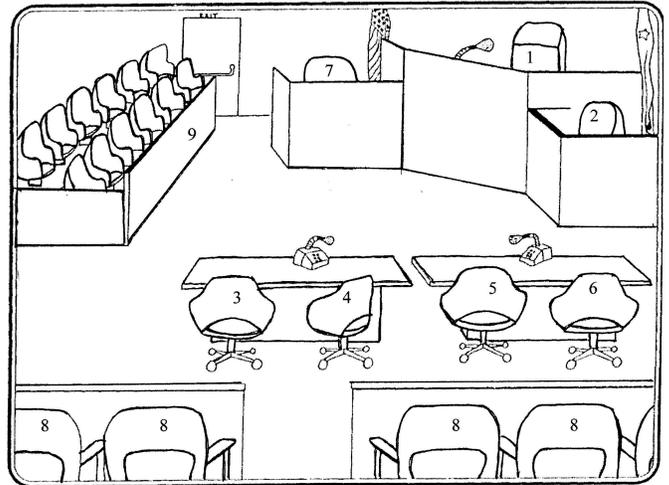
The attorney or paralegal will walk you into the courtroom. The drawing below shows the courtroom. The attorney or paralegal can tell you which chairs in the courtroom will be filled when you testify. Match the number with the chair in the courtroom to see where everyone will sit.

1. Judge
2. Clerk of Court
3. District Attorney or Prosecutor
4. Police Officer
5. Defendant's Attorney
6. Defendant
7. The Witness (You!)
8. Either the Grand Jury or, sometimes, people who want to see what is happening in the courtroom. The paralegal sits here sometimes.
9. Jury



People in the Courtroom

1. The judge



The judge is the boss of the courtroom and makes sure people follow the rules.

2. The clerk of court



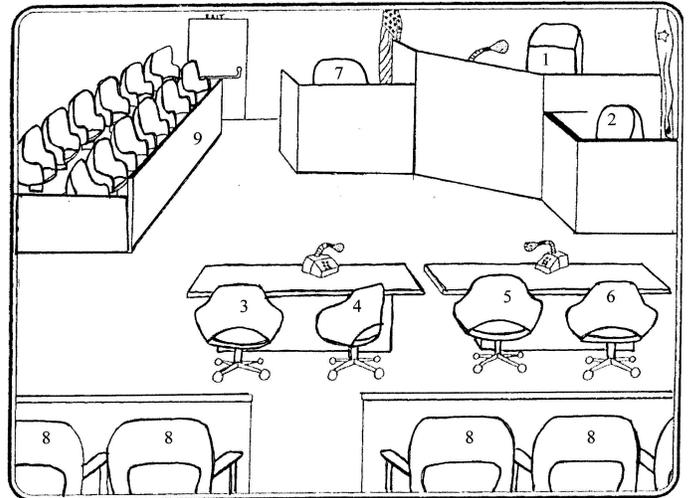
The clerk of court helps the judge by taking notes and giving people the oath (you will learn about that later).

3. The district attorney

The district attorney, sometimes called a prosecutor, has to know Alaska's laws to decide if a law has been broken. The district attorney's job is to try to prove the defendant broke the law.



4. The police officer



The police officer's job is to listen to the witnesses. Sometimes he or she will whisper or pass notes to the prosecutor. The police officer is a witness, too.

5. The defendant

The defendant is the person the police and the prosecutor say has broken the law. Maybe you know the defendant, maybe you don't. The defendant can be someone in your family. The defendant mostly sits quietly in the courtroom but sometimes writes notes or whispers to his or her attorney.



6. The defendant's attorney

The defendant's attorney's job is to help the defendant. The defendant's attorney gets to ask you questions after the prosecutor has finished asking you questions.

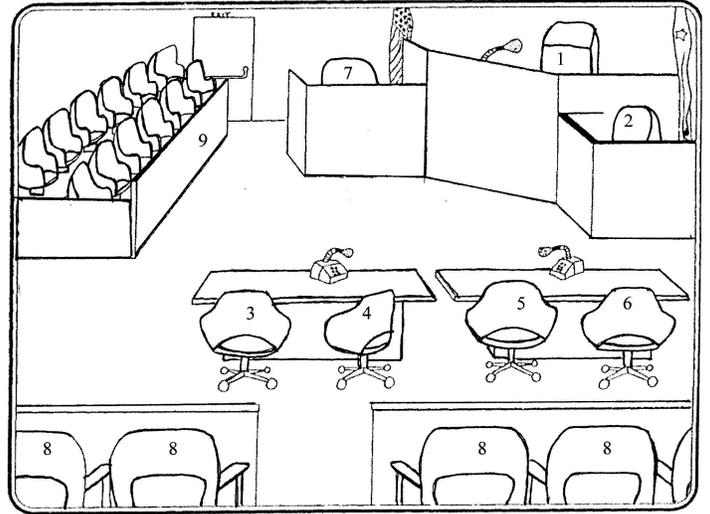
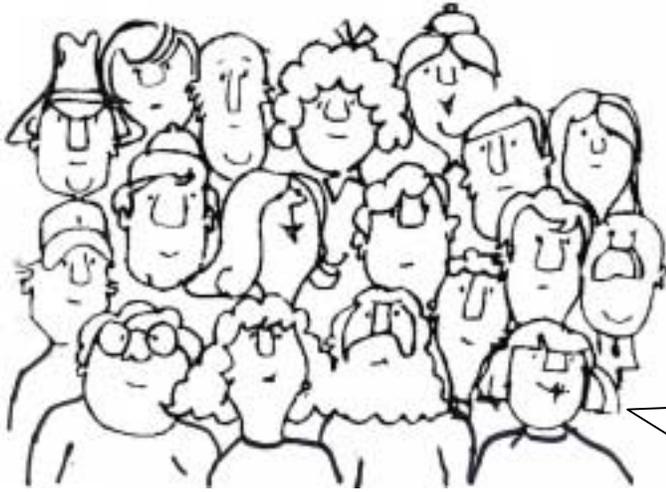
7. The witness...YOU!



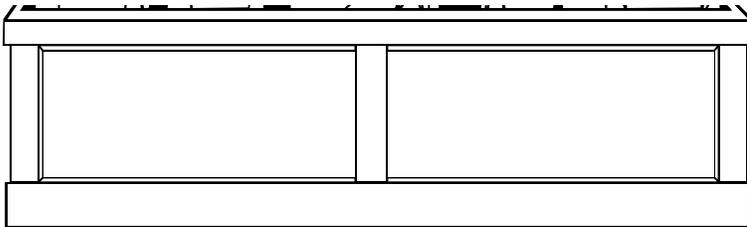
Your job is to answer questions and to always tell the truth. That job never changes.

There are two types of juries.

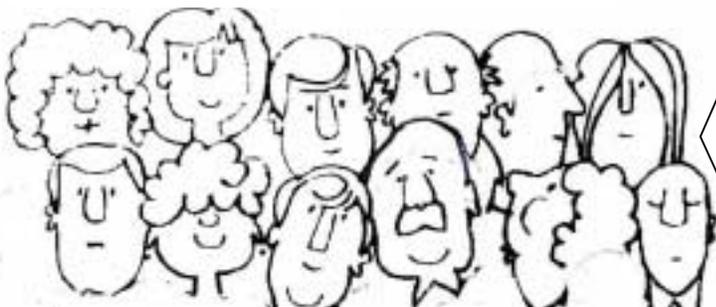
8. The Grand Jury



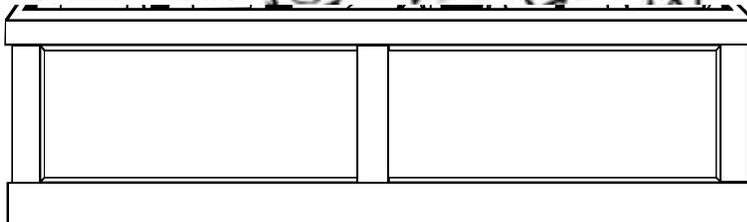
Hello, we are the Grand Jury. We are people from your community. We are in a private courtroom with only the prosecutor and one witness at a time. We sometimes get to ask questions.



9. The trial jury



Hello, we are the trial jury. We are people from your community. We are in a public courtroom with the judge, the prosecutor, the defendant, the defendant's attorney, the witness and sometimes court watchers. We decide if the defendant is guilty of breaking the law. We sit quietly and listen.



During trials, sometimes court watchers sit in the chairs numbered 8 in the diagram.

The Job of a Witness and Taking the Oath

The job of a witness is to tell the truth. Remember, that job never changes. Telling the truth is so important in court that all witnesses take an oath to tell the truth. An oath is like a promise.

Testifying means answering questions in court after taking the oath. The attorney or paralegal will bring you into the courtroom and take you to the witness chair where you will sit while you testify. Then, you will take the oath.

Taking the Oath

The judge or a person the judge has chosen will give you the oath. Most of the time it is someone who works for the judge whose job is called a court clerk. The clerk will ask you to raise your right hand and ask you to swear or promise to tell the truth. You take the oath to tell the truth by saying, "I do."



Answering Questions

Hi. My name is Mark. What happens after I take the oath?



You answer questions.

First, the prosecutor will ask you questions.

Then, the defense attorney will ask you questions.

It is their job to think of all the questions that they want to ask you.

It is your job to answer the questions they ask and to always tell the truth.

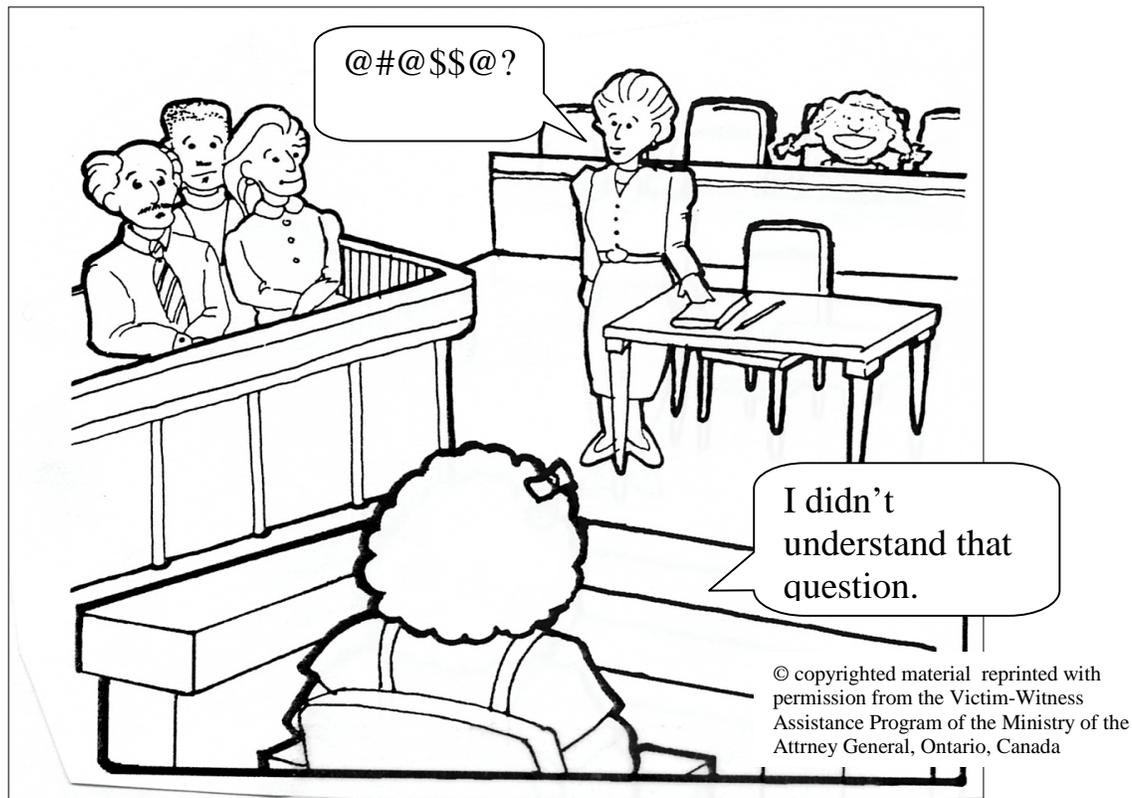
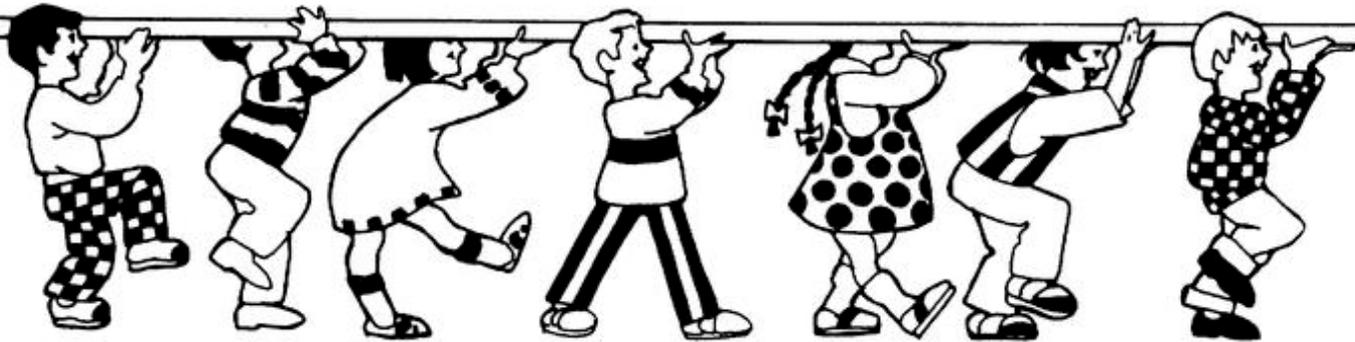
Sometimes when you are answering a question, the other attorney will stand up and interrupt you by saying "objection." He says that so he can talk to the judge. Do not worry if that happens. You have not done anything wrong. Just stop talking until the judge tells you to answer questions again.



Just remember these good witness rules!

RULES FOR ALL WITNESSES

1. Tell the truth.
2. If you forget the question that was asked, ask the attorney to say it again.
3. If you don't understand the question, or you can't remember something, just tell them you do not understand or you can not remember.
4. Never guess or make up an answer. If you don't know the answer, say you don't know.
5. If you don't agree with what someone says, tell them you don't agree.
6. If you know the answer to only part of the question, answer the part you know, then tell the judge that you can't answer the other part.
7. If you have a question while you are a witness, or something is bothering you, talk to the judge.
8. Do not chew gum or wear a hat in the courtroom.



My name is Henry. What I have to testify about makes me very sad and it is embarrassing. I am worried about crying in court.



If you are asked an embarrassing question, remember that judges and attorneys and everyone in court have heard people talk about embarrassing things before. Besides that, everyone has had embarrassing things happen to him or her, so they will understand how difficult it is for you.

Try not to worry about crying in court. Lots of people cry in court and it is okay to cry in court. If you think you might cry in court, tell the prosecutor and he or she will make sure there are tissues for you.

My name is Marci. I am happy to testify but worried because when I get excited I have to go to the bathroom. What if I have to go to the bathroom while I am testifying?



You tell the judge you need to go.



You will know you are finished testifying when the judge tells you that you are excused.



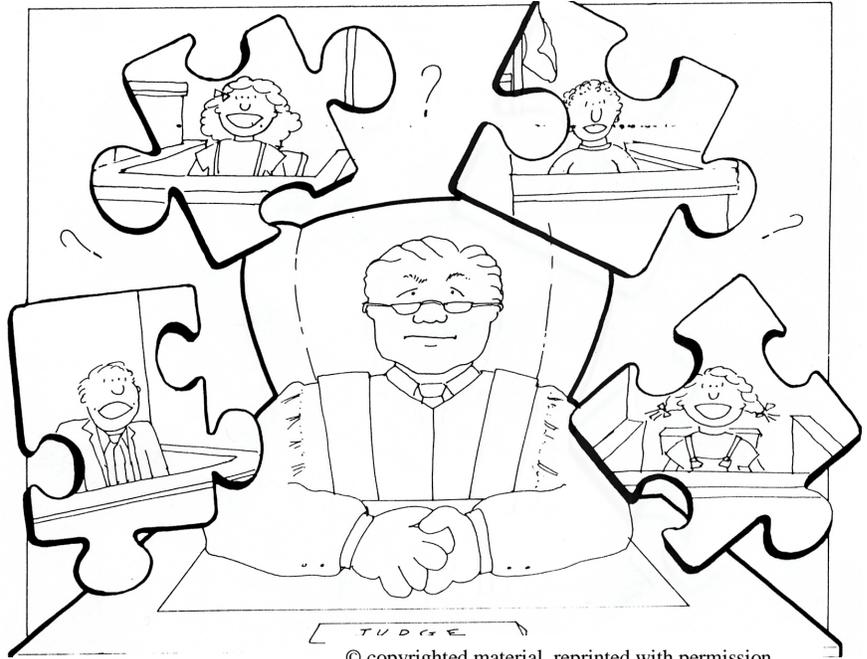
After you are excused, you may leave the witness stand. The attorney or paralegal will tell you if you may leave the courthouse. You may feel very tired and want to rest, or you may just want to play.



The Judge or the Jury's Decision

After all the witnesses have testified, the judge or the jury has a job to do. That job is to decide if there is enough evidence to prove the defendant broke the law. This is like putting a puzzle together.

Sometimes the jury or the judge will feel confused or think that an important piece is missing. If that happens, they may find the defendant not guilty of breaking the law. It is never the fault of a witness if the defendant is found guilty or not guilty. The witness does his or her job by answering questions and telling the truth.



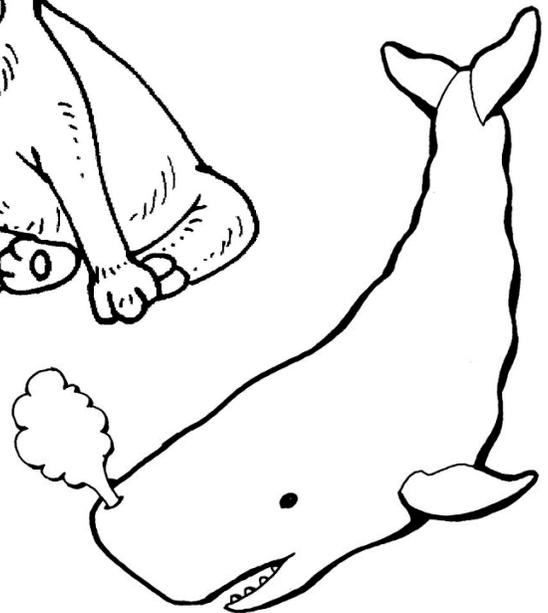
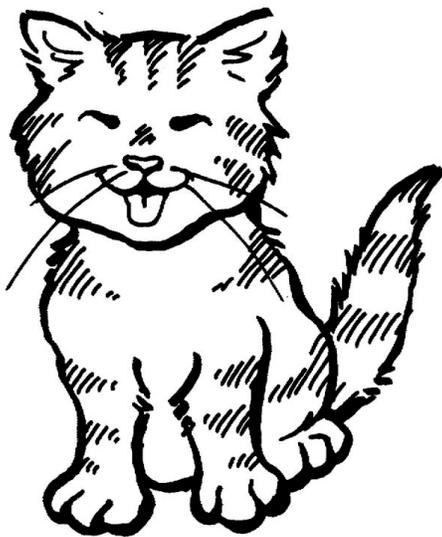
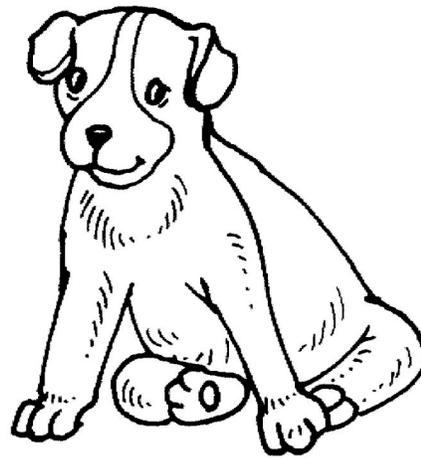
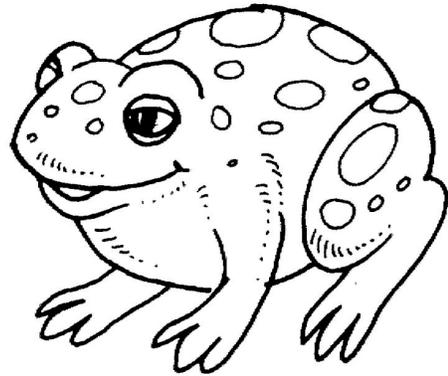
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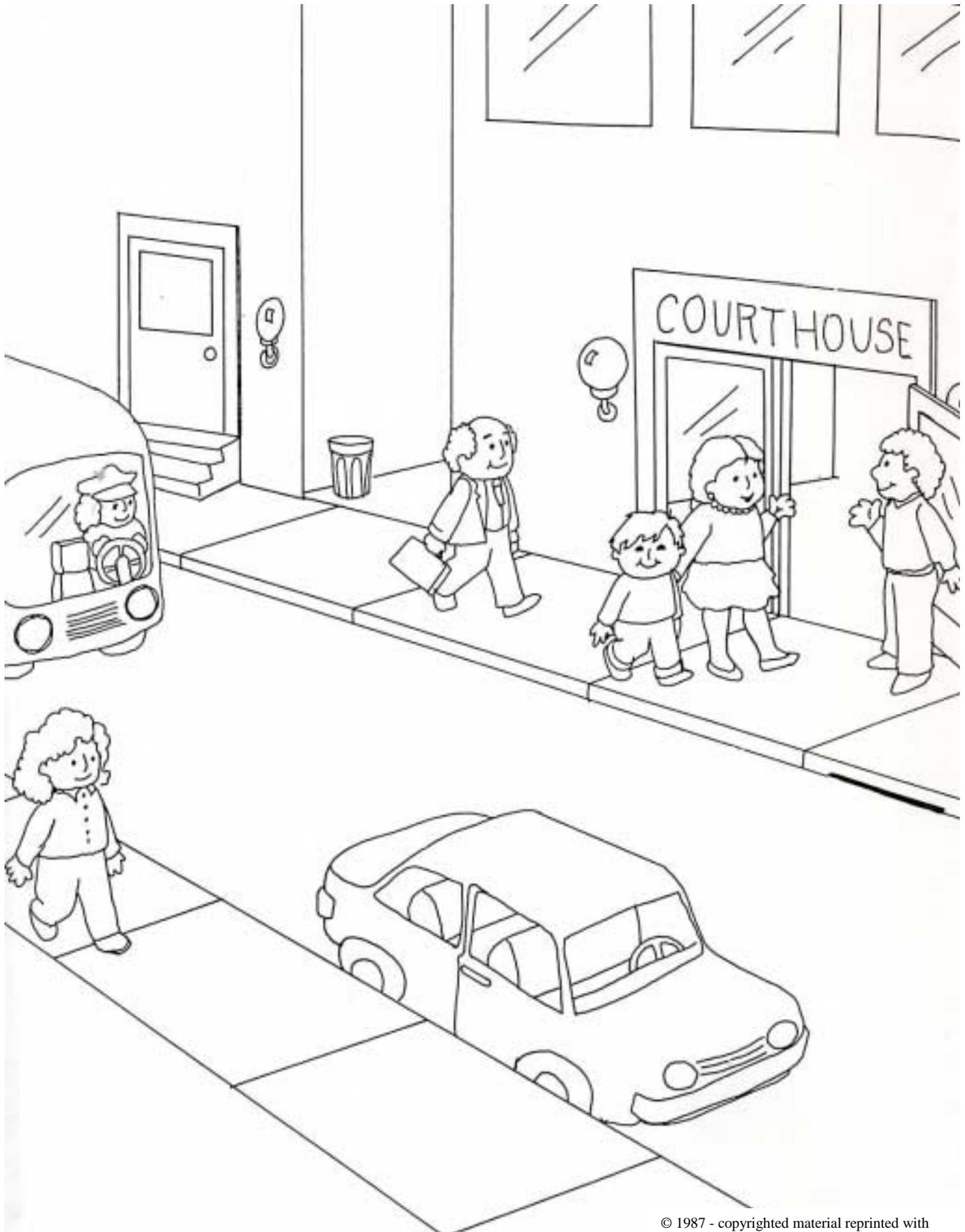
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ACTIVITY SECTION

The rest of the book has fun things to do. Animals are not allowed to come to court but they are fun to color. Here are some animals for you to color.



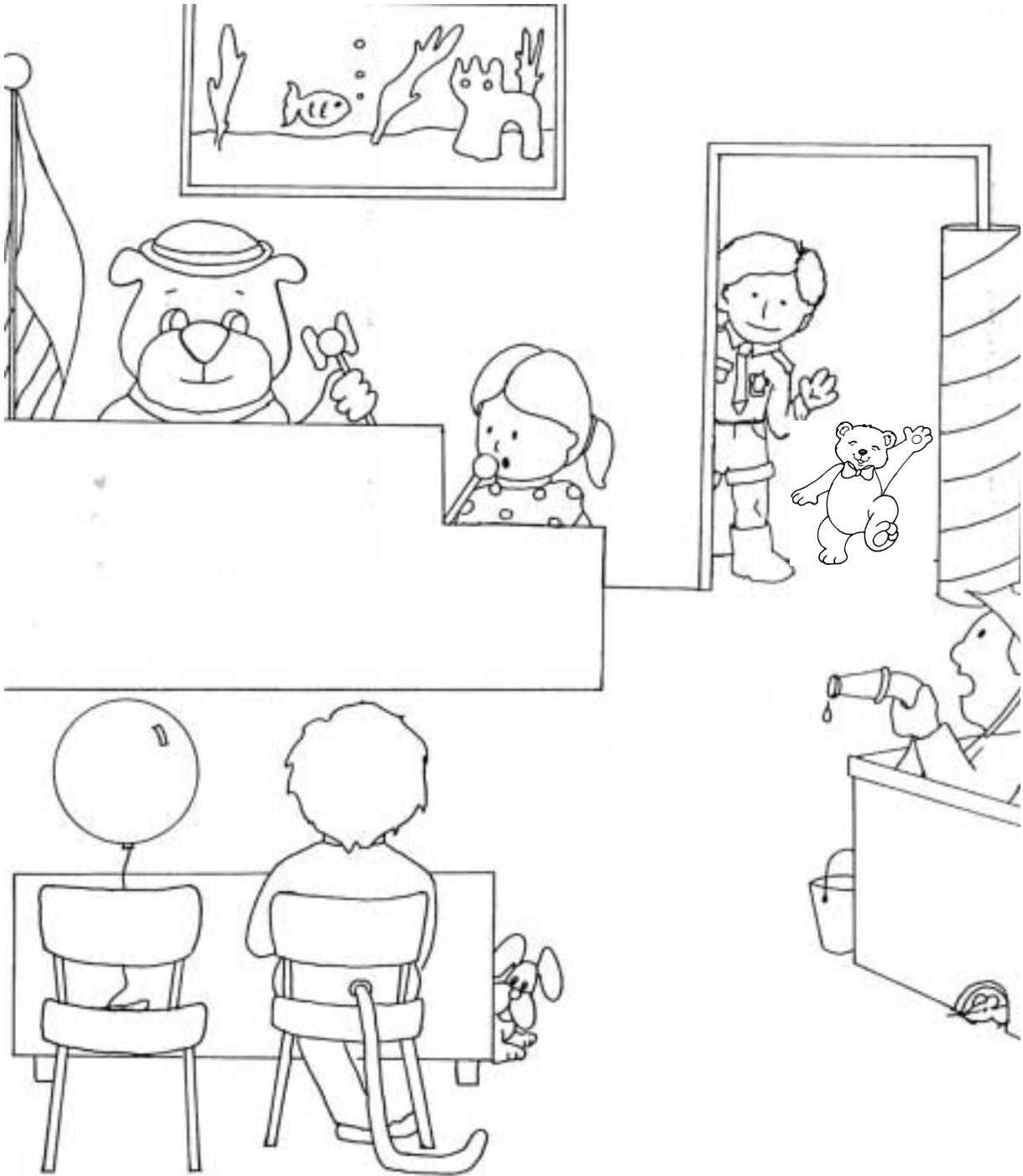
COLOR THE WITNESS GOING TO THE COURTHOUSE





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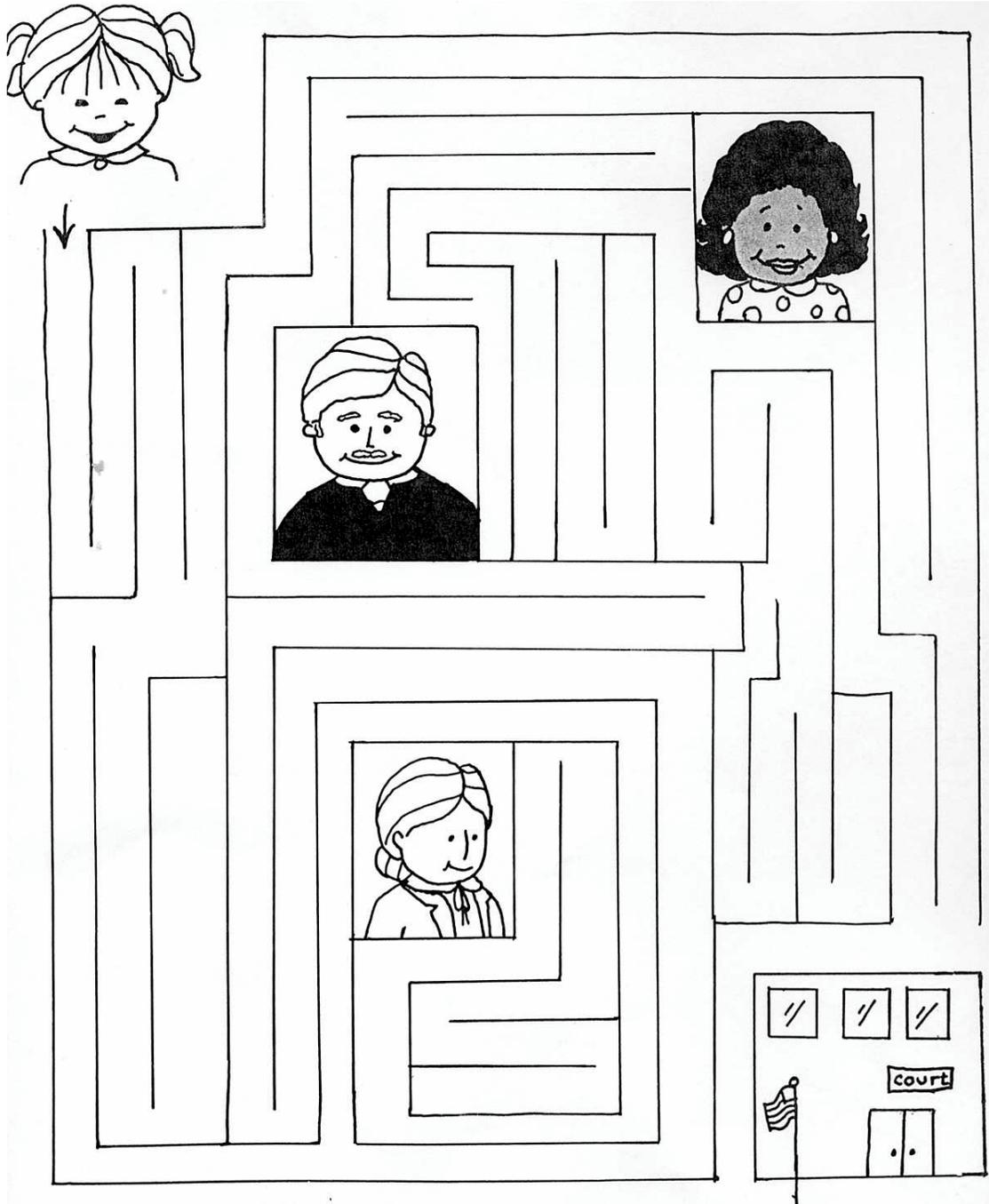
Color the defendant and his attorney in court. Do you remember that the defendant is the person who the prosecutor says has broken the law? Breaking the law is a crime.



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Find what is wrong with this courtroom.

See last page for answers.



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Help the witness get to court.

See last page for answers.

Word Search Activity

Find and circle the court words. See the list at the bottom of the page for the words. Some words are forwards, some are backwards and some are diagonal. Good luck!!

P C O U R T H O U S E G L R A
 A C J A O H T A O H T U R T R
 R O C R B J C P T W R E N S N
 A U O L J M C R T R E X L O N
 L R E G E H W O T N U C U R S
 E T T I C R U S B Z E U U M S
 G T N V T E K E Y Y N S P E N
 A M A E I W P C E R R E G E O
 L I D D O D R U J L U D E T I
 R T N J N O C T T S U J T I T
 E C E T B E N O C J E K U N S
 B I F E T R E R E W S N A G E
 S V E N L A W I T N E S S S U
 N E D U T O W A I T I N G W Q
 A E Y F I T S E T I C Y U U E

WORD LIST

JUDGE	DEFENDANT	EXCUSE	COURTHOUSE
WITNESS	CLERK	JURY	OBJECTION
OATH	TESTIFY	LAW	PROSECUTOR
ROBE	VICTIM	MEETINGS	TRUTH
COURT	ANSWER	QUESTIONS	WAITING
PARALEGAL			

See last page for answers.

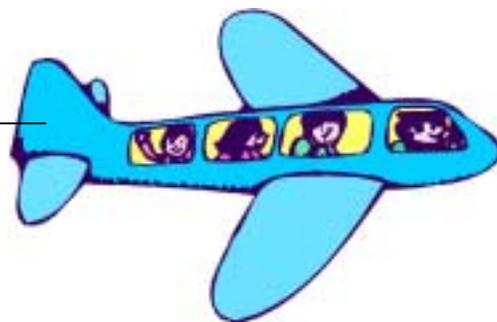
MATCH GAME

Match the words in column A to the meaning in column B. The first one is done for you.

Column A	Column B
Paralegal •	• The boss of the courtroom
Judge •	• People who had crimes happen to them
Prosecutor •	• Citizens who decide if the defendant is guilty after listening to all the witnesses
Courthouse •	• The prosecutor's helper who will probably meet with you and talk with you about court
Defendant •	• The person who the prosecutor says broke the law
Victims •	• A broken law
Crime •	• A building where judges work to decide if someone has broken a law
Witness •	• A person who saw, heard or knows something about a crime
Court Clerk •	• A promise to tell the truth
Oath •	• Rules everyone has to follow
Jury •	• The person who gives the oath to witnesses
Testify •	• The attorney who works for the defendant
Law •	• The attorney who must prove the defendant broke the law...he or she is also called an assistant district attorney
Defense Attorney •	• Answering questions under oath

Drawing Page

This is the end of our book. We hope you liked learning about court! Now that the book is finished, we will all travel home again. Good-bye!



This project was supported by Grant No. 95-WF-NX-0020, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, coordinates the activities of the following program offices and bureaus: Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Victims of Crime. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.