

Children

Criminal Court

Using a Screen

Using a screen is a 'special measure' that can help some young witnesses to give their evidence.

If you want to go inside the courtroom and tell the court what you know from the witness box ... but feel a bit nervous about seeing a particular person in the courtroom - you can ask for a screen to be used so that you can't see them.

This might be a barrier, or a curtain or a room divider– the important thing is that you won't be able to see the person. You'll still be able to see the judge or sheriff, the other court staff, the jury and the people who will be asking you questions

There will be a camera in the courtroom so that the people on the other side of the screen can see you on their courtroom television monitor when you're telling the court what you know.

If you want, you can also have an adult to sit with you when you are giving evidence, so that you don't feel alone. The person who is allowed to sit with you is called a support person or a supporter. They will be near you but they cannot help you answer the questions. You can help to choose someone to sit with you.

Watch the support person programme in this DVD to find out more.

Most people stand up when answering questions in the courtroom, but there is usually a chair in the witness box, so that if you get tired or would like to sit down you can ask the judge or sheriff.

To help you tell the court what you know, the people in the court will ask you different questions. You should listen carefully to the questions and take your time to answer.

Some of the questions might make you feel a bit upset or embarrassed. But the people inside the court hear lots of young people talking about all sorts of things - take your time and always tell the truth.

In some cases, everything that is said in the courtroom is recorded, so try not to answer by nodding or shaking your head – try to remember to speak out loud – so that everyone can hear you.

The most important job for a witness is to tell the truth. If you don't understand a word or a question don't be afraid – just say "I don't know what that means" or "I don't understand".

If you're not sure of an answer, don't guess, or make up an answer – it's OK to say "I don't know" or "I can't remember".

It's hard to tell how long it will take you to tell the court what you know, but, like school, the court will stop for breaks and for lunch, but if you feel tired and would like an extra break, you should tell the sheriff or judge or the person with you.

Being a witness is very important. The court can only make a decision about what may have happened with the help of information from witnesses like you.