

SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

GUIDE FOR SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS

HOW TO FILE • WHAT TO EXPECT • WHERE TO GET HELP

Effective November 1, 2026

Important information before you begin

THIS GUIDE IS NOT LEGAL ADVICE this guide explains common filing procedures. It is not legal advice, does not cover every situation, and is not a substitute for the Pennsylvania Rules of Appellate Procedure, statutes, court orders, or legal advice from a lawyer.

You are responsible for identifying the correct filing, meeting every deadline, following the rules, and presenting your legal arguments. A filing may be rejected, returned for correction, dismissed, or denied if it does not comply with applicable requirements.

Rules and filing requirements can change. Check the current rules and official court information before filing. If this guide conflicts with a rule, statute, or court order, the rule, statute, or order controls.

How to use this guide

Start with the filing you are considering. Then read the related checklist and the section on formatting, fees, service, and deadlines. The guide covers common procedures, not every type of case or filing.

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1. Filing without a lawyer

A person who represents themself in a court case is often called a "self-represented litigant" or "pro se" litigant. You may represent yourself, but you must follow the same applicable procedural rules as a lawyer.

What you should know

- You are responsible for researching the law and rules that apply to your case.
- Court staff can provide general procedural information, but cannot tell you what arguments to make, predict how the Court will rule, or act as your lawyer.
- The Court generally reviews legal issues based on the record created in the lower court. It usually does not receive new evidence or retry the facts.
- A missed deadline or a filing that does not follow the rules may affect your rights.

Consider speaking with a lawyer. Appellate practice can be complex. If possible, consult an attorney before filing, especially if a deadline is approaching or your case involves complicated legal issues.

If you already have a lawyer

Pennsylvania Rule of Appellate Procedure 121(g) limits what a party may file on their own when a lawyer remains counsel of record. The rule permits only certain *pro se* filings, such as a notice of appeal, a request to change or remove counsel, a response to counsel's withdrawal motion, a complaint that counsel has abandoned the party, or an application to file a petition for allowance of appeal nunc pro tunc. Other *pro se* filings may be docketed but not accepted.

If you have court-appointed counsel and want to represent yourself, you may need to ask the court that appointed counsel for permission to proceed without a lawyer. Check the rules that apply to your case.

You cannot represent another person. A person who is not a lawyer cannot file papers or conduct litigation on behalf of another person or a business, even with a power of attorney.

Finding a lawyer

Local and state bar associations may offer lawyer-referral services or information about reduced-fee and free legal services. The Court cannot recommend a particular lawyer.

Pennsylvania Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service:
https://www.pabar.org/site/Public/lrsblurb

2. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is the highest court in the Commonwealth. It has one Chief Justice and six associate Justices. The Court supervises Pennsylvania's Unified Judicial System and decides cases within the jurisdiction granted by the Pennsylvania Constitution, statutes, and court rules.

What the Court does

- Reviews certain decisions of the Superior Court and Commonwealth Court.
- Hears appeals that the law allows to be taken directly to the Supreme Court.
- Exercises original jurisdiction in certain cases, including some petitions for writs.
- May assume extraordinary jurisdiction in a pending matter involving an issue of immediate public importance.

Discretionary Review

The Supreme Court does not automatically review a case because a party disagrees with a lower court. Some filings ask the Court to exercise its discretion to hear a case. Other matters may be reviewed only if specific legal and procedural requirements are met.

Appeals to the Supreme Court

In an appeal, the Court generally considers the evidence and proceedings already recorded in the lower court. It is usually not the place to present new evidence, repeat factual disputes, or start over.

Choose the correct procedure. A petition, appeal, application, or writ is not interchangeable with another. Filing under the wrong procedure can cause delay or result in the filing being dismissed or returned.

3. The Office of the Prothonotary

The Office of the Prothonotary is the Supreme Court's filing office. It receives and processes court papers, maintains the docket, communicates court orders and notices, and performs other duties assigned by the Rules of Appellate Procedure and the Court.

What the office can do

- Provide general information about filing procedures and applicable administrative requirements.
- Tell you whether a document has been received or whether a case appears on the docket.
- Explain where papers should be filed and how to contact the appropriate district office.

What the office cannot do

- Give legal advice or choose the right filing for you.
- Cannot provide forms.
- Draft your petition, brief, or legal argument.
- Predict when the Court will decide your case.
- Communicate privately with a Justice about your case on your behalf.

Send Court papers to the filing office. Do not send filings directly to a Justice's chambers. File them with the appropriate Office of the Prothonotary, or with the lower-court clerk when the rules require filing there.

Three district offices

The Supreme Court Prothonotary has Eastern, Middle, and Western District offices. The appropriate office generally depends on the county associated with the case and the applicable filing rules.

If you are incarcerated, determine the district based on the county where the conviction or underlying case arose—not simply the county where you are currently imprisoned.

A map of the districts assigned to each filing office may be found here: https://www.pacourts.us/Storage/media/pdfs/20210218/235306-countymapsupreme-003267.pdf

Contact Information

Contact the district office responsible for your case. Have the docket number, the name of the lower court, the date of the order, and the type of filing available when you call.

District office	Mailing / street address	Telephone	General coverage
Eastern District	Room 468, City Hall, Philadelphia, PA 19107	(215) 560-6370	Philadelphia County and capital cases.
Middle District	Pennsylvania Judicial Center 601 Commonwealth Ave., Suite 4500, P.O. Box 62575, Harrisburg, PA 17106-2575	(717) 787-6181	Adams, Berks, Bradford, Bucks, Carbon, Centre, Chester, Clinton, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Fulton, Franklin, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Luzerne, Lycoming, Mifflin, Monroe, Montgomery, Montour, Northampton, Northumberland, Perry, Pike, Schuylkill, Snyder, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Wayne, Wyoming, and York Counties.
Western District	801 City-County Building, Pittsburgh, PA 15219	(412) 565-2816	Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Blair, Butler, Cambria, Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Fayette, Forest, Greene, Indiana, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Potter, Somerset, Venango, Washington, Warren, and Westmoreland Counties.

https://www.pacourts.us/courts/supreme-court/prothonotarys-addresses

4. Common filings

This section provides a general overview of common filings. It does not list every requirement. Before filing, review the specific rule, any statutes, and the order you are challenging.

Petition for Allowance of Appeal (Pa.R.A.P. 1112)

A petition for allowance of appeal asks the Supreme Court to review a decision of an intermediate appellate court: the Superior Court or the Commonwealth Court. It is not the appeal itself. The Supreme Court has discretion to decide whether to hear the case and generally grants review only when special and important reasons support review.

Your petition should clearly identify the legal questions you want the Court to review and explain why they warrant review. Questions not properly presented may be treated as waived. Closely review Pa.R.A.P. 1115 for a full listing of the contents of a petition for allowance of appeal.

Deadline for filing a Petition for Allowance of Appeal (Pa.R.A.P. 1113)

The general deadline is 30 days after entry of the applicable order. Special deadlines may apply to certain matters, including some Election Code and Local Government Unit Debt Act cases. The deadline generally runs from entry of the order — not the day you receive it. The Court may not enlarge the time permitted to file a Petition for Allowance of Appeal pursuant to Pa.R.A.P. 105(b). If you are unable to file your petition in the required timeframe then you may file an application with the Court seeking leave to file an allowance of appeal *nunc pro tunc*.

Do not wait for a reminder. You are responsible for calculating and meeting the deadline. If you are unsure when the deadline expires, promptly consult the applicable rule or a lawyer.

If the petition is denied (Pa.R.A.P. 1123)

If the Court denies a petition for allowance of appeal, an application for reconsideration is strongly disfavored and is considered only in extraordinary circumstances. It should identify qualifying intervening circumstances, not simply repeat the arguments already presented. Review Pa.R.A.P. 1123 for the requirements and deadline.

If the petition is granted (Pa.R.A.P. 1122)

If the Court grants the petition, the Prothonotary generally obtains the record and issues a briefing schedule. The schedule sets the deadline for Appellant’s brief and explains how Appellee’s deadline is calculated.

Petition for Allowance of Appeal Checklist

Cover Page — Pa.R.A.P. 1115(b) and 2172(a)

☐ Court and District: Identify the Court and District.

☐ Caption: Use the caption verbatim as it appears in the intermediate appellate court, with the parties identified as Petitioner and Respondent.

☐ Type of Filing: Identify the filing as a Petition for Allowance of Appeal.

☐ Appeal From Paragraph: Include the docket number, decision, and date of decision of the intermediate appellate court and the lower court or agency.

☐ Filer Information: Include the filer's address and telephone number, if available.

Required Sections of the Petition

☐ Table of Contents — Pa.R.A.P. 2174(a): List the page number for each section of the petition.

☐ Table of Citations — Pa.R.A.P. 2174(b): List, in alphabetical order, the short caption, citation, and page number for each case cited in the petition.

☐ Reference to the Opinions Below — Pa.R.A.P. 1115(a)(1): Identify the opinions issued by the courts below.

☐ Text of the Order in Question — Pa.R.A.P. 1115(a)(2): Reproduce verbatim the portion of the order sought to be reviewed and include the date the order was entered.

☐ Questions Presented for Review — Pa.R.A.P. 1115(a)(3): List the questions the Petitioner asks the Court to address. Generally, only questions set forth in the petition will be reviewed by the Court.

☐ Statement of the Place of Raising or Preservation of the Issues — Pa.R.A.P. 1115(a)(4): Immediately after the questions presented, specify when and how each issue was raised in the proceedings below, how each issue was presented, and how each lower court addressed it. Include record citations as required by Pa.R.A.P. 2117(c).

☐ Concise Statement of the Case — Pa.R.A.P. 1115(a)(5): Summarize the facts relevant to the arguments and provide a clear, concise picture of the case.

☐ Concise Statement of Reasons Relied Upon for Allowance of Appeal — Pa.R.A.P. 1115(a)(6): Explain clearly, accurately, and concisely why the Court should allow the appeal. Focus on the essential reasons supporting review.

☐ Conclusion: Briefly summarize the requested relief, and sign and date the petition.

Opinions, Orders, and Filing Requirements

☐ Opinions and Orders — Pa.R.A.P. 1115(a)(7): Attach the Superior Court or Commonwealth Court opinion and order, the order denying reconsideration if reconsideration was requested, and the trial court or agency order and/or Pa.R.A.P. 1925(a) opinion, as applicable.

☐ Payment or Waiver of Costs and Fees: Include the required payment or documentation of an applicable waiver.

☐ Proof of Service — Pa.R.A.P. 121 and 122: Include proof of service as required. The proof of service must detail the name of the party served, manner of service, location of service, and date of service.

Word Count and Compliance

☐ Word Limit: Ensure the petition contains fewer than 9,000 words, excluding opinions and exhibits.

☐ Certificate of Compliance with Word Count: Include the certificate unless the requirement is waived because the petition contains fewer than 20 pages.

☐ Certificate of Compliance with the Public Access Policy: Include the required certificate.

Appeals as of right or Granted Petitions for Allowance of Appeal (Pa.R.A.P. 905, 909, 1101)

Some cases may be appealed directly to the Supreme Court as an appeal as of right. The right to appeal depends on the type of case, the order, and the governing statute and rules. Most commonly, the Supreme Court has exclusive jurisdiction of appeals from any final order entered in any matter which was originally commenced in the Commonwealth Court and was not an appeal of an order or decision from another court, an agency that has an internal appeal unit (42 Pa.C.S. §723(a)), or magisterial district judge. A final order is generally defined as an order that disposes of all claims and of all parties (Pa.R.A.P. 341).

A notice of appeal and a jurisdictional statement are required. The notice of appeal is generally filed with the clerk of the court that entered the order, not mailed directly to the Supreme Court.

A jurisdictional statement is a separate document that is filed simultaneously with the notice of appeal. The jurisdictional statement briefly explains why the Supreme Court has authority to hear the appeal, describes the procedural history, and identifies the questions presented. It is not a full appellate brief.

The form of the Notice of Appeal is described in Pa.R.A.P. 904(a), and has been altered on the next page for this Court's specific needs.

Sample Notice of Appeal (Pa.R.A.P. 904)

COMMONWEALTH COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

John Doe, Appellant

v.

C.D., Appellee

[Note: The order of parties in the caption should be the same as the order in the Commonwealth Court Pa.R.A.P. 904(b)]

Commonwealth Ct. Docket No.: _____

Notice of Appeal

Notice is hereby given that John Doe, Appellant above named, hereby appeals to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania from the order entered in this matter on the ____ day of _____, 20___. This order has been entered in the docket as evidenced by the attached copy of the docket entry.

[Please attach a copy of the Commonwealth Court's docket entries to the notice of appeal]

John Doe
SCI Huntingdon - #FM-XXXX
1120 Pike St.
P.O. Box 999
Huntingdon, PA 16652

Jurisdictional Statement (Pa.R.A.P. 909)

Pursuant to Pa.R.A.P. 909, when a notice of appeal is filed to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, a jurisdictional statement must also be filed. The Jurisdictional Statement is a brief statement of the issues in question and the procedural history of the case. Only if the Court were to note probable jurisdiction and issue a briefing schedule would you be able to make full and complete legal arguments as to the merits of the questions you presented for review in the jurisdictional statement.

An appellee may file an answer to the jurisdictional statement within 14 days of service of the jurisdictional statement. The Supreme Court will then review the jurisdictional statement and any answer. The Court will then either note probable jurisdiction, defer consideration of jurisdiction, or may quash or dismiss the appeal.

Important: Only the questions stated in the jurisdictional statement, or subsidiary questions fairly comprised within them, will ordinarily be considered by the Court. Ensure that all intended issues for review are adequately presented.

Jurisdictional Statement Checklist (Pa.R.A.P. 910)

A jurisdictional statement must include the following in the order set forth below:

☐ Opinions from the courts below: Reference the official and unofficial reports of opinions delivered by the courts below, if any, and provide citations for any reported opinions.

☐ Unreported opinions: Append copies of any unreported opinions to the jurisdictional statement.

☐ Basis for jurisdiction: State the basis for the Supreme Court's jurisdiction under an Act of Assembly or general rule or identify the cases believed to sustain jurisdiction.

☐ Order being reviewed: Include the text of the order in question or the portions sought to be reviewed, along with the date the order was entered. The order may be appended.

☐ Procedural history: Provide a concise statement of the procedural history of the case.

☐ Questions presented: State the questions presented for review in terms appropriate to the case and circumstances, without unnecessary detail. Confirm that the questions encompass the issues intended for review.

2. Form and length

☐ Ensure the statement does not exceed 1,000 words, excluding the appendix.

☐ Numbered paragraphs are not required.

3. Word Count and Filing Requirements

☐ Word count: If the statement exceeds five pages when produced on a word processor or typewriter, include a certification that it complies with the word-count limit. The certification may be based on the word count provided by the word-processing system used to prepare the statement.

☐ Public Access Policy: Include the certificate of compliance required by Pa.R.A.P. 127 concerning the Case Records Public Access Policy of the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania.

☐ Proof of Service — Pa.R.A.P. 121 and 122: Include proof of service as required. The proof of service must detail the name of the party served, manner of service, location of service, and date of service.

4. Nonconforming statements

☐ Confirm that the jurisdictional statement complies with all applicable requirements before filing.

☐ If the Prothonotary returns the statement for noncompliance, file and serve a corrected statement within seven days after its return to constitute timely filing under the rule.

Briefing Your Case (Pa.R.A.P. 2111)

If the Court grants a Petition for Allowance of Appeal, notes probable jurisdiction for an appeal, or otherwise accepts a case for merits review, it will set a briefing schedule. A brief explains the legal issues, the relevant facts and procedural history, the governing law, and why the law supports the result you request.

Brief	Purpose
Appellant's brief	Explains why the order being challenged should be reversed or changed.
Appellee's brief	Responds to the appellant's arguments and explains why the order should be affirmed or otherwise upheld.
Appellant's reply brief	Responds to issues raised in the appellee's brief; it should not simply repeat the appellant's opening brief.

Briefs must comply with the required format, content, word limits, service requirements, and number of copies. Use the current rules and the Court's briefing schedule.

Reproduced Record (Pa.R.A.P. 2154)

If you will be filing a Reproduced Record in your case, you must file a Designation of Contents of Reproduced Record 30 days **before** the Appellant's brief is due (Pa.R.A.P. 2154). Your Reproduced Record should be filed in accordance with Pa.R.A.P. 2152 and Pa.R.A.P. 2153.

If you are proceeding *in forma pauperis* or are otherwise exempt from filing a Reproduced Record you may instead immediately focus on filing your brief.

Appellant's Brief - Checklist

Cover Page — Pa.R.A.P. 2172(a)

☐ Court and District: Identify the court and district.

☐ Caption: Use the caption verbatim as it appears in the intermediate appellate court, with the parties identified as Appellant and Appellee.

☐ Type of filing: Identify the filing as "Appellant's Brief."

☐ Appeal From paragraph: Include the docket number, decision, and date of decision of the intermediate appellate court and the lower court or agency.

☐ Filer information: Include the filer's address and telephone number, if available.

Required Sections of the Brief

☐ Table of Contents — Pa.R.A.P. 2174(a): List the page number for each section of the brief.

☐ Table of Citations — Pa.R.A.P. 2174(b): List, in alphabetical order, the short caption, citation, and page number for each case cited in the brief.

☐ Statement of Jurisdiction — Pa.R.A.P. 2114: Explain precisely why the Court has jurisdiction, citing the applicable statutory provision, general rule, or case law.

☐ Order or Other Determination in Question — Pa.R.A.P. 2115: Reproduce verbatim the portion of the order sought to be reviewed and include the date the order was entered.

☐ Statement of the Scope and Standard of Review — Pa.R.A.P. 2111: Explain the scope of the Court's review and the applicable standard of review, supported by statutory citations or case law.

☐ Statement of the Questions Involved — Pa.R.A.P. 2116: State the questions presented for review as succinctly as possible and identify the holdings of the lower courts. Subsidiary questions fairly comprised within the questions presented are included; questions not presented will be considered waived.

☐ Statement of the Case — Pa.R.A.P. 2117: Present the procedural history chronologically and concisely, along with the pertinent facts necessary to understand the case. Do not include arguments in this section. If waiver is at issue, identify how and when the issue was preserved for appeal.

☐ Summary of Argument — Pa.R.A.P. 2118: Summarize the core issues and principal arguments in a few paragraphs, not exceeding two pages.

☐ Reasons to Allow an Appeal Challenging the Discretionary Aspects of a Sentence, if applicable — Pa.R.A.P. 2111(a)(7): Include this section when applicable.

Argument and Conclusion

☐ Argument — Pa.R.A.P. 2119: Thoroughly address each issue presented for review, using statutory citations and case law as necessary. Provide a separate argument section for each question presented and properly cite all authorities.

☐ Conclusion: Briefly summarize the requested relief, and sign and date the brief.

Opinions, Orders, and Pleadings

☐ Opinions and Orders — Pa.R.A.P. 2111(b): Include the Superior Court or Commonwealth Court opinion and order, the order denying reconsideration, and the trial court or agency order and/or Pa.R.A.P. 1925(a) opinion, as applicable.

☐ Pleadings — Pa.R.A.P. 2111(c): If a Reproduced Record is not required, attach copies of pleadings already entered into the record that are necessary to allow the Court to make an informed decision.

Service, Word Count, and Formatting

☐ Proof of Service — Pa.R.A.P. 121 and 122: Include proof of service as required. The proof of service must detail the name of the party served, manner of service, location of service, and date of service.

☐ Word Limit: Ensure the brief contains fewer than 14,000 words, excluding opinions and exhibits.

☐ Certificate of Compliance with Word Count: Include the certificate unless the requirement is waived because the brief contains fewer than 35 pages.

☐ Formatting — Pa.R.A.P. 124: Ensure the brief complies with the applicable formatting requirements.

☐ Certificate of Compliance with the Public Access Policy: Include the required certificate.

☐ Correct Number of Copies: Submit the required number of copies.

Appellee's Brief - Checklist

Cover Page — Pa.R.A.P. 2172(a)

☐ Court and District: Identify the Court and District.

☐ Caption: Use the caption verbatim as it appears in the intermediate appellate court, with the parties identified as Appellant and Appellee.

☐ Type of Filing: Identify the filing as "Appellee's Brief."

☐ Appeal From Paragraph: Include the docket number, decision, and date of decision of the intermediate appellate court and the lower court or agency.

☐ Filer Information: Include the filer's address and telephone number, if available.

Required Sections of the Brief

☐ Table of Contents — Pa.R.A.P. 2174(a): List the page number for each section of the brief.

☐ Table of Citations — Pa.R.A.P. 2174(b): List, in alphabetical order, the short caption, citation, and page number for each case cited in the brief.

☐ Counter-Statement of the Questions Involved, if desired — Pa.R.A.P. 2116: Provide a counter-statement if challenging Appellant's statement of the questions involved. Failure to provide a counter-statement will be treated as an acknowledgment that Appellant's statement is sufficient and remains unchallenged.

☐ Counter-Statement of the Case, if desired — Pa.R.A.P. 2117: Provide a counter-statement if challenging Appellant's statement of the case. Failure to provide a counter-statement will be treated as an acknowledgment that Appellant's statement is sufficient and remains unchallenged.

☐ Summary of Argument — Pa.R.A.P. 2118: Summarize the core issues and principal arguments in a few paragraphs, not exceeding two pages.

☐ Argument — Pa.R.A.P. 2119: Thoroughly address the issues in the case, using statutory citations and case law as necessary. Provide a separate argument section for each question presented and properly cite all authorities.

Service, Word Count, and Formatting

☐ Proof of Service — Pa.R.A.P. 121 and 122: Include proof of service as required. The proof of service must detail the name of the party served, manner of service, location of service, and date of service.

☐ Word Limit: Ensure the brief contains fewer than 14,000 words, excluding opinions and exhibits.

☐ Certificate of Compliance with Word Count: Include the certificate unless the requirement is waived because the brief contains fewer than 35 pages.

☐ Certificate of Compliance with the Public Access Policy: Include the required certificate.

☐ Formatting — Pa.R.A.P. 124: Ensure the brief complies with the applicable formatting requirements.

☐ Correct Number of Copies: Submit the required number of copies.

Appellant's Reply Brief - Checklist

Cover Page — Pa.R.A.P. 2172(a)

☐ Court and District: Identify the Court and District.

☐ Caption: Use the caption verbatim as it appears in the intermediate appellate court, with the parties identified as Appellant and Appellee.

☐ Type of Filing: Identify the filing as "Appellant's Reply Brief."

☐ Appeal From Paragraph: Include the docket number, decision, and date of decision of the intermediate appellate court and the lower court or agency.

☐ Filer Information: Include the filer's address and telephone number, if available.

Required Sections of the Brief

☐ Table of Contents — Pa.R.A.P. 2174(a): List the page number for each section of the brief.

☐ Table of Citations — Pa.R.A.P. 2174(b): List, in alphabetical order, the short caption, citation, and page number for each case cited in the brief.

☐ Summary of Argument — Pa.R.A.P. 2118: Summarize the core issues and principal arguments in a few paragraphs, not exceeding two pages.

☐ Argument — Pa.R.A.P. 2119: Address issues raised by Appellee or an *amicus curiae* that Appellant did not previously address in the principal brief. Repeating arguments already made in the principal brief is unnecessary.

Service, Word Count, and Formatting

☐ Proof of Service — Pa.R.A.P. 121 and 122: Include proof of service as required. The proof of service must detail the name of the party served, manner of service, location of service, and date of service.

☐ Word Limit: Ensure the brief contains fewer than 7,000 words, excluding opinions and exhibits.

☐ Certificate of Compliance with Word Count: Include the certificate unless the requirement is waived because the brief contains fewer than 15 pages.

☐ Certificate of Compliance with the Public Access Policy: Include the required certificate.

☐ Formatting — Pa.R.A.P. 124: Ensure the brief complies with the applicable formatting requirements.

☐ Correct Number of Copies: Submit the required number of copies.

What happens after briefing?

The Court may decide a case on the written submissions or schedule oral argument. Oral argument is not automatic.

After a decision is issued by the Court, a party may seek reargument only under the applicable rules and within the applicable deadline. As with a denied Petition for Allowance of Appeal, reargument is a matter of judicial discretion, so there is no need to file, and the Court will not grant, a redundant argument in the form of an Application for Reargument.

Ancillary Applications for Relief

An ancillary application for relief asks the Court to take a specific procedural action in a case currently before the Court. It should explain the relief requested, the Court's authority to grant it, the relevant procedural history and facts, and the legal basis for the request. Attach the orders or other documents needed for the Court to decide the application, and serve the required parties.

There are a number of petitions and applications that are recognized by the Rules that you can file with the Supreme Court. The methods for filing and the form that the papers are to take are specifically explained in the Rules that deal with your specific filing. However, if you believe that your pleading is not addressed by the Rules you should consult Chapter 1 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Appellate Procedure and file a motion under Pa.R.A.P. 123, Application for Relief.

Application for Relief (Pa.R.A.P. 123) - Checklist

☐ Cover Page: Include a cover page identifying the filing.

☐ Table of Contents, if necessary: Include a table of contents when appropriate.

☐ Table of Citations, if necessary: Include a table of citations when appropriate.

☐ Summary of the Requested Relief: Briefly state what relief you are requesting from the Court.

☐ Argument: Clearly and concisely present the procedural history, all pertinent facts, and the legal arguments necessary for the Court to make an informed decision. The argument may be presented in numbered paragraphs.

☐ Conclusion: State clearly and specifically the relief requested. Failure to specify the requested relief will constitute waiver of that relief. Sign and date the application.

☐ Exhibits: Append the documents, pleadings, orders, and opinions necessary for the Court to make an informed decision.

☐ Proof of Service — Pa.R.A.P. 121 and 122: Include proof of service as required. The proof of service must detail the name of the party served, manner of service, location of service, and date of service.

☐ Certificate of Compliance with the Public Access Policy: Include the required certificate.

Original jurisdiction: writs (Pa.R.A.P. 3307)

The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction to issue certain writs, including mandamus, prohibition, and habeas corpus. These are specialized remedies with specific legal requirements. In general, mandamus seeks to compel a required official act; prohibition seeks to stop a tribunal from acting beyond its jurisdiction; and habeas corpus challenges unlawful restraint of liberty.

A petition for a writ must not be used as a substitute for an appeal or to avoid appellate deadlines. A petition invoking original jurisdiction must be accompanied by a separate application for leave to file original process under Pa.R.A.P. 3307.

Important: You must reference the lower court docket number from the case that you are asking this Court to intervene in on the cover page of your Petition for Writ.

Upon filing the writ, a respondent may file an answer within 14 days of service. Once filed, the Court will review the writ and any response. If you wish to file an ancillary application while decision on the writ is pending, you must seek leave of Court.

Applications for Extraordinary Relief (Pa.R.A.P. 3309)

The Court may assume extraordinary jurisdiction in a matter pending before another Pennsylvania court when the matter involves an issue of immediate public importance. This is an exceptional procedure, not a substitute for the ordinary appeal process.

Important: You must reference the lower court docket number from the case that you are asking this Court to intervene in on the cover page of your Petition for Writ.

5. Preparing and submitting your filing

Before filing, identify the exact document you need, the court or office where it must be filed, the deadline, the filing fee, and the applicable service and formatting requirements. Requirements vary by filing type.

A. Filing Fees

Appellate Jurisdiction:

Petitions for Allowance of Appeal

Petition or Cross-Petition for Allowance of Appeal	original + 1	$91.25
Petition or Cross-Petition for Allowance of Appeal from a Unemployment Compensation Board of Review (filed by an individual)	original + 1	----------
Answer/No Answer Letter	original + 1	----------
Application for Bail	original + 1	----------
Application for Stay	original + 1	----------
Application for Supersedeas	original + 1	----------
Application for Discontinuance	original + 1	----------
Motion for Remand of Record	original + 1	----------
Application for Reconsideration	original + 1	$15.00
Petition for Leave to File a Petition for Allowance of Appeal Nunc Pro Tunc	original + 1	$71.25

Direct Appeals or Granted Petition for Allowance of Appeals

Notice of Appeal	original	----------
Jurisdictional Statement	original	$91.25
Designation of Contents of Reproduced Record	original + 1	----------
Praecipe for Appearance	original + 1	----------
Motion to Withdraw as Counsel	original + 1	----------
Praecipe to Discontinue	original + 1	----------
1st Application for extension of time to file Briefs	original + 1	----------
2nd Application for extension of time to file Briefs	original + 1	$10.00
3rd+ Application for extension of time to file Briefs	original + 1	$25.00

Briefs (regardless of party type)	original + 15	----------
Reproduced Record	10	----------
Reproduced Record (*In Forma Pauperis*)	----------	----------
Application for Oral Argument	original + 1	----------
Application for Continuance	original + 1	----------
Motion to Discontinue	original + 1	----------
Application for Reconsideration	original + 1	$15.00

Original Jurisdiction:

Application for Leave to File an Original Process	original + 1	----------
Petition for Writ of Mandamus	original + 1	$71.25
Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus	original + 1	$71.25
Petition for Writ of Prohibition	original + 1	$71.25
Extraordinary Jurisdiction/King's Bench	original + 1	$71.25

For a List of all current Copy and Fee requirements are available online at: https://www.pacourts.us/courts/supreme-court/copy-and-fee-requirements

B. Application to waive fees and costs

Rules amended November 1, 2026. The Rules use the term "waiver of fees and costs." The phrase "*in forma pauperis*" may still appear in older materials, but the older *in forma pauperis* forms in the prior version of this manual should not be reused as the current application process.

A waiver may allow a person who cannot afford required court fees and costs to proceed without paying those amounts. A waiver is not automatic in every case. Eligibility and procedure are governed by Pa.R.J.A. 1990 and Pa.R.A.P. 550–554, effective November 1, 2026. Older materials may call this process "*in forma pauperis"* or "IFP." Use the current application process, not an old IFP form.

If a waiver was already granted in the same case (Pa.R.A.P. 551)

A waiver granted by a trial court under Pa.R.J.A. 1990 generally continues when the same case proceeds on appeal. The Court may require you to file a verified statement confirming when the waiver was granted, that your financial circumstances have not substantially changed, and that you remain unable to pay the fees and costs. *See* Pa.R.A.P. 551.

If you need to apply for a new waiver of fees and costs (Pa.R.A.P. 551)

If you have not already been granted a waiver in the case, you may seek a new waiver by filing an application under Pa.R.J.A. 1990. The application generally must include a verified statement describing your financial circumstances and inability to pay, unless an exception applies. The trial-court clerk does not charge a filing fee for the application.

- For an appeal from a trial court, file the application in the trial court at the same time you file the notice of appeal, or later while the appeal is pending.
- For a petition or other document that begins in the Supreme Court, file the application in this Court at the same time as the initiating document, or later.
- An application filed in an appellate court must include the certificate of compliance required by Pa.R.A.P. 127 concerning confidential information and documents.
- The waiver decision is handled ex parte. Under the rule's comment, you do not have to serve the application on other parties.
- In unemployment compensation matters, fees and costs covered by the rules are deemed waived for a petitioner without an application.

The court may ask for additional information or send the application to a court of record for a hearing and decision. If an application is not filed when the case begins, the case may be docketed, but fees and costs may have to be paid before it can proceed. Filing an application does not extend the deadline to appeal or excuse other filing requirements. If the application is denied, special appellate review procedures may be available.

Sample Application to Waive Fees and Costs (*In Forma Pauperis)* (Pa.R.J.A. 1990)

The following form is based on Pa.R.J.A. 1990, subdivisions (i) and (j). Use the current official form, if one is published, and confirm which court or filing office must receive it. These forms concern waiver of fees and costs; they replace the former "in forma pauperis" application terminology for this process.

A sample Application to Waive Fees and Costs is available on the next page.

APPLICATION TO WAIVE FEES AND COSTS

Party Name: _____
(*First*) (*Middle*) (*Last*)

Residence: _____

City, State, Zip:_____

Appellate Case No. _____

☐ Check the box if you are currently without a house or apartment.

Do you currently receive one or more of the following public benefits?

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (food stamps)
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (Not Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI))
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Public Housing or Section 8 Housing
- Needs-based VA Pension
- Low-Income Energy Assistance
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Other need-based federal, state, or local program: _____
(*name of program*)

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered "Yes," skip the remainder of the form and sign/date the VERIFICATION

I am providing the following information about people who live with me:

I support __ adult children, who are incapable of self-support due to a physical or mental disability.

I support __ children under 18.

GROSS MONTHLY INCOME (income before paying taxes and other deductions):

$ _____ monthly gross wages. I work as a _____ for
(*job title/description*)
_____.
(*name of employer*)

$ _____ unemployment compensation. I have been unemployed since

_____. My last employer was _____.
(*date*) (*name of employer*)

$ _____ money received from other people.

$ _____ ☐ Retirement/Pension ☐ Disability
☐ Workers Comp ☐ Social Security
☐ Child/Spousal support ☐ Other sources:
_____
(*describe sources*)

$ _____ Total monthly gross income

ASSETS (Current Value):

$ _____ Cash

$ _____ Bank accounts or other financial assets

$ _____ Primary vehicle

$ _____ Other vehicles

$ _____ House

$ _____ Other real estate

$ _____ Other property: _____
_____
_____
(*describe*)

$ _____ Total value of property

MONTHLY EXPENSES YOU PAY:

$ _____ Rent/mortgage payment
$ _____ Food and household supplies

$ _____ Utilities, including cell phone

$ _____ Clothing and other personal expenses

$ _____ Medical and dental expenses/insurance

$ _____ Child care

$ _____ Transportation, including car payments and repairs

$ _____ Child and spousal support or alimony

$ _____ Other expenses: _____

_____

_____

(*describe*)

$ _____ Total monthly expenses

Are there other facts that you would like the court to know about your circumstances that may help the court decide whether to grant your application, such as you are experiencing homelessness or you have health issues?

_____

_____

_____

_____

VERIFICATION

I understand that I have a continuing obligation to inform the court of an improvement in my financial circumstances that would permit me to pay the fees and costs in this case. If I fail to inform the court of any changes in my circumstances, I understand that the court may rescind the waiver of fees and costs and order me to pay those fees and costs.

I verify that the statements made in this application are true and correct. I understand that false statements herein are made subject to the penalties of 18 Pa.C.S. § 4904, relating to unsworn falsification to authorities.

_____ _____

Date Party's Signature

Sample Verified Statement in support of continued waiver on appeal (Pa.R.A.P. 551)

The sample on the next page is for when a waiver was previously granted in the same case and the applicable rule or court directs you to confirm that the waiver remains appropriate. Check Pa.R.A.P. 551 and the order in your case for the exact requirements. This form does not replace a new application when a new application is required.

Party Name: _____
First Middle Last

Residence: _____

City, State, Zip:_____

Appellate Case No. _____

VERIFIED STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF CONTINUED WAIVER OF FEES AND COSTS

I, _____, state as follows:

1. A waiver of fees and costs was granted in this case by _____ (court) on _____(date). A copy of the order is attached, if available.

2. My financial circumstances have not substantially changed since the waiver was granted and I remain unable to pay the fees and costs associated with this case.

3. I understand that I have a continuing obligation to inform the Court of an improvement in my financial circumstances that would enable me to pay waived fees and costs.

4. The statements in this verified statement are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief. I understand that false statements herein are made subject to the penalties of 18 Pa.C.S. § 4904, relating to unsworn falsification to authorities.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

If the waiver application is denied (Pa.R.A.P. 554)

Under Pa.R.A.P. 1614, appellate review of an order denying an application for a waiver of fees and costs is initiated by a petition for specialized review. The petition must be filed within 30 days after entry of the denial order. The review is ex parte: do not name another party as a respondent or serve the petition on other parties. Serve the petition only on the court of record that denied the application. The petition must explain briefly why that court erred and include the materials and certification required by the rules. Carefully review Pa.R.A.P. 1601–1606 and 1614 before proceeding.

If your financial circumstances improve (Pa.R.A.P. 553)

If you receive a waiver, you have a continuing obligation to inform the court if your financial circumstances improve enough that you can pay the waived fees and costs. See Pa.R.A.P. 553.

The waiver does not extend deadlines. Do not assume that asking for a fee waiver extends the deadline to appeal or excuses other filing requirements. Meet all applicable deadlines and follow the current rules.

C. General formatting requirements for Court filings

Formal Pleadings

One of the principal tenets of the Pennsylvania Rules of Appellate Procedure is that all requests for relief must be formal in nature. A letter requesting relief is not a substitute for a formal pleading. Filers must make a good-faith effort to prepare their filings in compliance with the Rules of Appellate Procedure. Although a failure to comply with every requirement described in this section will not necessarily be fatal to a filing, noncompliance may delay the requested relief and require corrections before docketing.

Size and Physical Characteristics of Documents – Pa.R.A.P. 124(a)

All documents filed with an appellate court must be prepared on 8½-by-11-inch pages with a white background and must comply with the following requirements:

- First-page spacing: The first page must have a three-inch space at the top to accommodate court stamps, filing notices, and other markings.
- Margins: Margins must be at least one inch on all four sides, except for the three-inch top space required on the first page.
- Double spacing: Text must be double-spaced. Quotations longer than two lines may be indented and single-spaced, and footnotes may be single-spaced.

- Font size and legibility: Lettering must be clear and legible, with a minimum size of 14 point for the text and 12 point for footnotes.

- Single-sided pages: Documents must be printed on one side of the page, except that exhibits and similar supporting documents, briefs, and reproduced records may be printed on both sides.

Font and Spacing

Filers should ensure that all documents comply with the font-size, spacing, and legibility requirements described above.

Note: Individuals without access to a computer may handwrite their pleadings and copies or use a typewriter with a font that differs from the requirements of Pa.R.A.P. 124(a)(4), provided that the writing is legible and the content is identical in each copy.

Binding – Pa.R.A.P. 124(a)(5)

Original documents must be unbound. Copies must be firmly bound. Any metal fasteners or staples must be covered.

For ease of handling, copies should generally be bound along the left-hand side so that they open like a book. However, the binding method must comply with the Rule's requirements.

Cover Page – Pa.R.A.P. 2172(a)

Except for letters stating that no answer will be filed, all filings with the Court must include a cover page, which is distinct from a cover letter. **See the sample cover page on the following page for guidance.**

Generally, the cover page must contain the following information:

- **Court and District — Pa.R.A.P. 2172(a)(1)–(2)**
  Center the name of the Court and District at the top of the cover page. If the Court has assigned a docket number to the case, include that number near the top of the page.

- **Caption — Pa.R.A.P. 2172(a)(3)**
  - The caption identifies the parties involved in the proceeding.
  - Appellate or extraordinary jurisdiction: Use the caption from the lower courts, subject to any applicable requirements for identifying the parties in the particular filing.

  - Original or exclusive jurisdiction: Identify all parties against whom relief is sought and ensure that each is served.

- **Type of Filing — Pa.R.A.P. 2172(a)(4)**
  State the exact title of the filing on the cover page (e.g., Appellant's Brief, Petition for Allowance of Appeal, or Application for Relief).

- **Appeal From Paragraph — Pa.R.A.P. 2172(a)(5)**
  The Appeal From paragraph briefly identifies the procedural history of the case being appealed. It is generally required when invoking the Court's appellate jurisdiction. Refer to the sample cover page for an example of the information to include.

- **Filer Information — Pa.R.A.P. 2172(a)(6)**
  Include the filer's full name and mailing address. Do not include the mailing address of opposing parties in this section.

Sample Cover Page

In the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania
Middle District

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,
Respondent

v.

John Doe,
Petitioner

PETITION FOR ALLOWANCE OF APPEAL

Appeal from the Order of the Superior Court at XXX MDA 20XX, dated January 9, 2011, affirming the Order of the Court of Common Pleas, York County, at CP-XX-CR-XXXXXXX-2008, dated March 11, 2010.

Sample Cover Page - Yours Will be Different

John Doe
SCI Huntingdon - #FM-XXXX
1120 Pike St.
P.O. Box 999
Huntingdon, PA 16652

Sample Table of Contents

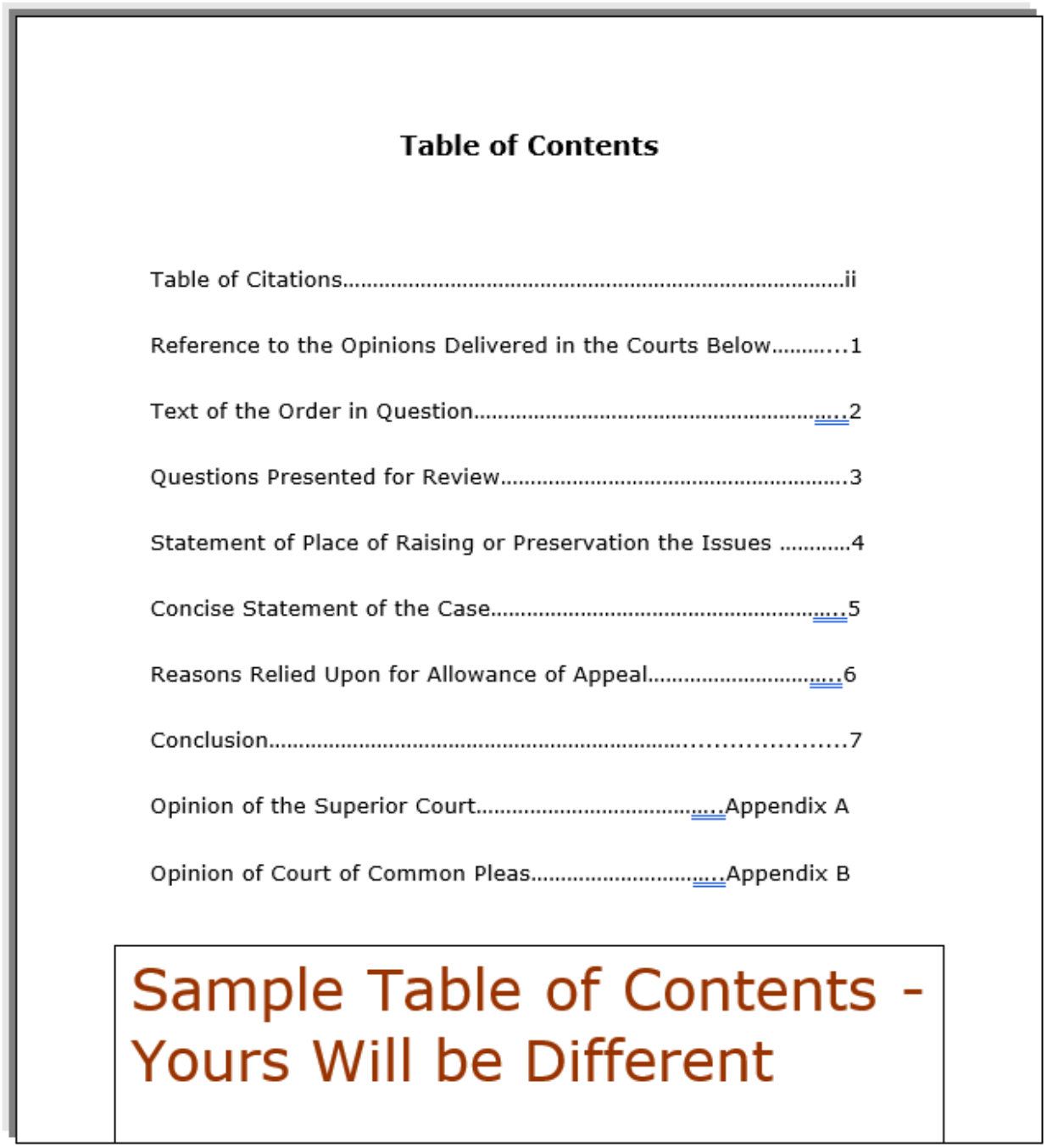


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Conclusion.....7

Opinion of the Superior Court.....Appendix A

Opinion of Court of Common Pleas.....Appendix B

Sample Table of Contents - Yours Will be Different

Sample Table of Citations

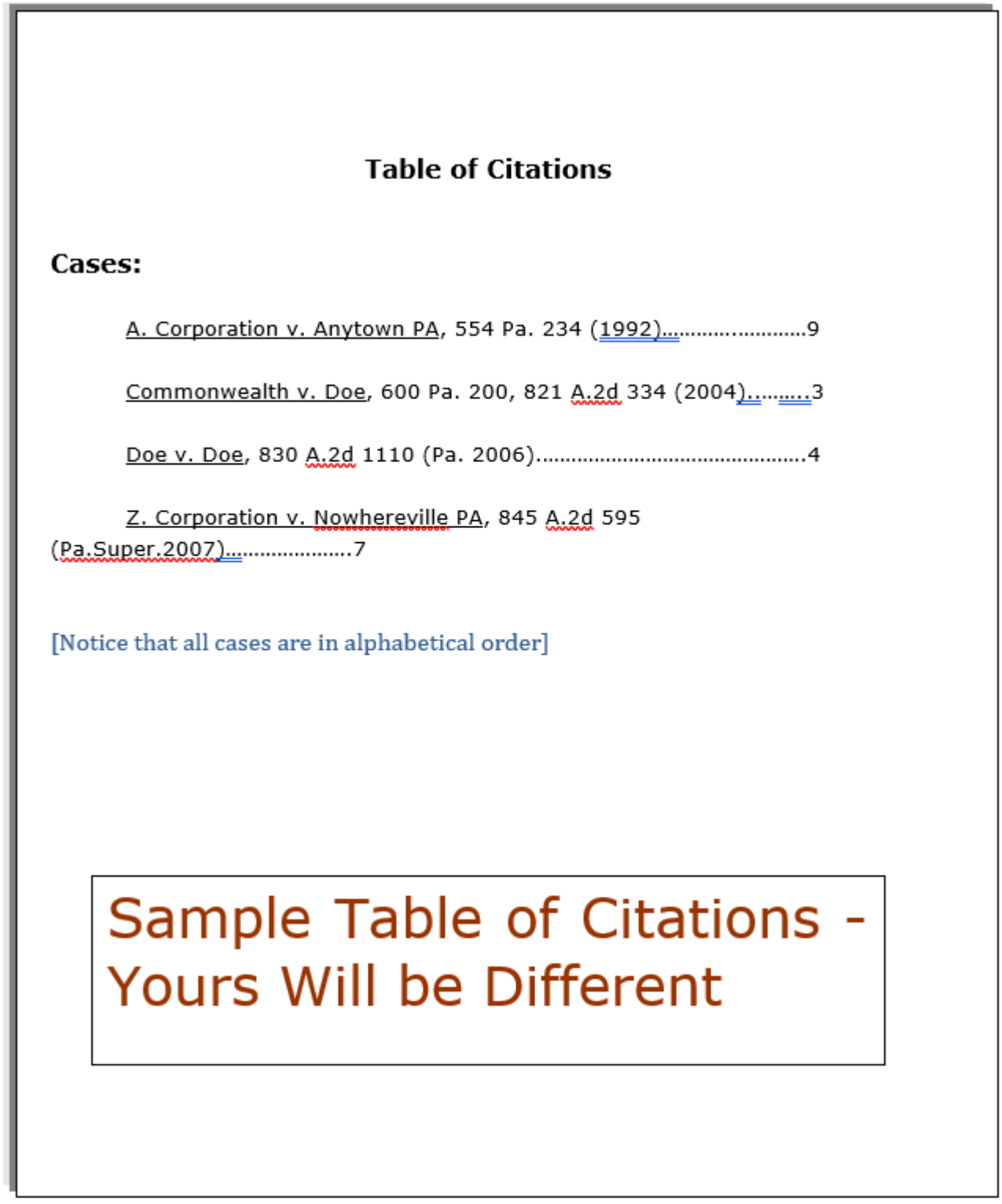


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Cases:

A. Corporation v. Anytown PA, 554 Pa. 234 (1992).....9

Commonwealth v. Doe, 600 Pa. 200, 821 A.2d 334 (2004).....3

Doe v. Doe, 830 A.2d 1110 (Pa. 2006).....4

Z. Corporation v. Nowhereville PA, 845 A.2d 595 (Pa.Super.2007).....7

[Notice that all cases are in alphabetical order]

Sample Table of Citations - Yours Will be Different

D. Proof of service

Proof of service tells the Court that you sent a copy of your filing to the other parties or their lawyers as required. Follow Pa.R.A.P. 121 and 122 and any rule specific to your filing. The proof of service should identify who was served, the address or approved method used, the date, and the document served, as required by the rules.

Do not assume that filing a document with the Court also serves the other parties. Keep a copy of the proof of service with your records.

A PROOF OF SERVICE IS REQUIRED for every filing. Under 18 Pa.C.S. §4904, a knowingly false proof of service constitutes a misdemeanor of the second degree.

Proof of Service Sample

A form example of a proof of service is available on the next page.

Proof of Service

I hereby certify that I am this day serving the foregoing document upon the persons and in the manner indicated below, which service satisfies the requirements of Pa.R.A.P. 121:

Name: _____ Address: _____
Representing: _____ _____
_____
Date Served: _____ _____

Method of Service:
☐First Class Mail/Commercial Carrier
☐Hand Deliver E-Mail (if applicable): _____
☐E-Mail/Fax* Fax (if applicable): _____

Name: _____ Address: _____
Representing: _____ _____
_____
Date Served: _____ _____

Method of Service:
☐First Class Mail/Commercial Carrier
☐Hand Deliver E-Mail (if applicable): _____
☐E-Mail/Fax* Fax (if applicable): _____

Name: _____ Address: _____
Representing: _____ _____
_____
Date Served: _____ _____

Method of Service:
☐First Class Mail/Commercial Carrier
☐Hand Deliver E-Mail (if applicable): _____
☐E-Mail/Fax* Fax (if applicable): _____

_____ Date: _____
(Original Signature of Filer)

Filer Information -
Address: _____ E-Mail *(if applicable)*: _____
_____ Fax *(if applicable)*: _____
_____
_____ Phone *(if applicable)*: _____

**Note: By selecting E-Mail or Fax as a method of service, you are verifying that you and the opposing party have an agreement that E-Mail or Fax is an acceptable method of service.*

E. Confidential information and public-access certification (Pa.R.A.P. 127)

Court filings must comply with the Unified Judicial System's Case Records Public Access Policy. Certain personal identifiers and confidential information must be omitted, redacted, or submitted separately as required by the policy and applicable rules. Review the current policy before filing.

Where required, include the certificate of compliance under Pa.R.A.P. 127. A fee-waiver application filed with an appellate court must include this certificate.

Certificate of Compliance (Pa.R.A.P. 127) Sample

A form example of a certificate of compliance is available on the next page.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

I certify that this filing complies with the provisions of the *Public Access Policy of the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania: Case Records of the Appellate and Trial Courts* that require filing confidential information and documents differently than non-confidential information and documents.

Submitted by: _____
(E.g., Appellant, Appellee, Petitioner, Respondent)

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Attorney No. (if applicable): _____

F. Deadlines and filing dates

Deadlines are strict. The date a deadline begins and the method for calculating it depend on the applicable Rule, the type of order, and the case. Read the Rule that applies to your filing and any court order carefully.

In order to preserve the filing date as the date of mailing, a Petition for Allowance of Appeal or Application for Reconsideration you must obtain a U.S. Postal Form 3817 or other similar U.S. Postal Service form from which the date of deposit can be verified. All other pleadings filed with the Office of the Prothonotary can be preserved with an official U.S. Postmark. Inmate Postmarks or Inmate Cash Slips can also be used to preserve the date for any filing, as well.

When a deadline is close, Contact a lawyer or review the applicable rule immediately. Do not rely on this guide or a staff conversation to calculate a deadline for your particular case.

Common Filing Deadlines

PLEADING	STANDARD DEADLINE*	CHILDREN'S FAST TRACK DEADLINE*
Petition for Allowance of Appeal	30 days**	—
Answer to Petition for Allowance of Appeal	14 / 17 days	10 / 13 days
Application for Reconsideration from Denial of Petition for Allowance of Appeal	14 days	7 days
Notice of Appeal and Jurisdictional Statement	30 days**	—
Notice of Appeal and Jurisdictional Statement (orders involving changes of venue or venire, or the Local Government Unit Debt Act or similar statutes)	10 days**	—
Notice of Appeal and Jurisdictional Statement (orders involving the Pennsylvania Election Code)	3 days**	
Answer to Jurisdictional Statement	14 / 17 days	—
Designation of Contents of Reproduced Record	30 days before Appellant's Brief	23 days before Appellant's Brief
Appellant's Brief	As determined by the Prothonotary's Office	—
Appellee's Brief	30 / 33 days	21 / 24 days
Appellant's Reply Brief	14 / 17 days	7 / 10 days
Application for Reargument	14 days	7 days
Answer to Application for Reargument	14 / 17 days	7 / 10 days
Applications for Relief, Ancillary Motions, and Pleadings Invoking the Court's Original or Extraordinary Jurisdiction	No fixed deadline specified	—
Answers to Applications for Relief, Ancillary Motions, and Pleadings	14 / 17 days	10 / 13 days

Calculating Filing Deadlines: Deadlines are calculated from the date the Court's order was entered or the date the opposing party served the filing—not the date you received the order or pleading. An additional three days is allowed when a party serves a document by first-class mail. Service by a court does not extend the filing deadline.

****Petitions for Allowance of Appeal and Notices of Appeal:** The deadline for filing a Petition for Allowance of Appeal may be extended by the timely filing of an Application for Reconsideration in the intermediate appellate court. The Application for Reconsideration must be filed within 14 days, or 7 days in a Children's Fast Track matter. Filing a timely Application for Reconsideration does not extend the deadline for filing a Notice of Appeal and Jurisdictional Statement.

Official Resources

Use official sources to confirm the current rule text, fees, forms, and filing instructions.

Supreme Court of Pennsylvania: https://www.pacourts.us/courts/supreme-court

Copy and fee requirements: https://www.pacourts.us/courts/supreme-court/copy-and-fee-requirements

Pennsylvania Rules of Appellate Procedure:
https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/

Pennsylvania Rules of Judicial Administration:
https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/

Pennsylvania Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service:
https://www.pabar.org/site/Public/lrsblurb

Important: This guide is a general procedural resource, not legal advice. Before filing, consult the current rules, applicable orders, and official Court instructions.