

When Do You Need to Hire an Attorney?

Serious matters should be handled by an attorney.

Legal matters range from simple traffic violations to criminal charges involving time in prison. While most people are comfortable enough managing a speeding ticket without the help of an attorney, they also know that serious issues like criminal charges, lawsuits, product liability, bodily injury, etc. require a mastery of the law in order to bring about a successful outcome. With any matter involving an appearance in court, hire an experienced attorney to represent you.

Here are just a few of the conditions (scenarios) in which the services of an experienced attorney will end up saving you time, money and needless stress:

You Could Go To Jail

If you are charged with a crime, including domestic violence, tax fraud, or even some motor vehicle offenses (such as driving under the influence, vehicular homicide, or so many unpaid parking tickets that an arrest warrant has been issued), hire an attorney.

You Could Lose A Lot of Money

If you stand to lose a great deal of money in a lawsuit, find a lawyer.

Your Opponent Has an Attorney

If your opponent has already engaged an attorney, you will begin any legal confrontation with a disadvantage.

Bodily Injury Is Involved

If someone has been injured in an automobile accident, bitten by a dog, or suffered an accident on your property, the services of an attorney are essential. Other situations include injuries resulting from the use of a defective product or significant illnesses attributable to certain pharmaceutical products.

You Are In A Complicated Divorce

Anytime a divorce is at the core of a problem - especially with disagreements over assets or custody of children, you will need an attorney's expertise.

You Need To Administer The Estate Of Someone Who Died

In situations involving complex estates, a probate lawyer can provide great assistance.

You Want To Do Comprehensive Estate Planning

Although many individuals can prepare a simple will, power of attorney, living will, or even a basic living trust without hiring an attorney, it's wise to seek legal advice if the estate is sizeable or if there are complex tax issues.

You Are Adopting A Child

Adopting a child is an important matter, and an attorney will assure things are done right.

A Contract Is Needed

It is essential that you understand the terms of any contract you are asked to sign. If you don't understand the terms, or how to prepare a contract, consult a lawyer.

Complex Business Matters

If you need a complex business organization (multiple entities), have complex tax matters, need to file for a patent, or become involved in litigation, hire a lawyer.

When to Consider Representing Yourself

Provided you feel comfortable handling the matter yourself, there are several situations that are more conducive to self-representation. These include:

Parking Tickets And Minor Traffic Violations

Most people who go to traffic court for these minor infractions do not hire a lawyer.

Relatively Simple Divorce

If you and your spouse can reach an agreement on the division of your property and debts, aren't going to be arguing over the custody or support of a child (or do not have any children), and are willing to cooperate in preparing and filing the necessary court papers, it is possible to handle your own divorce.

Small Claims Court Is Available

Most states have a specialized procedure for dealing with relatively minor disputes, typically involving claims below a certain dollar amount.

Basic Business Matters

With a little research you should be able to figure out things like registering for an Employer Identification Number (EIN), an assumed name (also known as doing business as or d/b/a), and a trademark or trade name; forming a business entity (LLC, corporation, partnership, etc.); creating basic contracts and forms; and hiring employees and independent contractors.