

IMPORTANT NOTE: As of July 1, 2017, all documents filed in the Illinois Appellate Court must be filed electronically (“e-filed”). You cannot file in any other way, and any instructions that describe other ways are not up to date.

To e-file, you must create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to select a service provider. Some are free, while others charge a fee. For instructions on how to e-file for free with Odyssey eFileIL, see *Odyssey File & Serve: Individual Filer User Guide* here: <https://tylertech.egain.cloud/kb/ilh5/content/PROD-16579/HTML-5-Individual-Filer-User-Guide-20170>

If you do not have access to a computer, or if you need additional help, you may take your documents to the appellate court clerk’s office, where you can use a public terminal to e-file your documents. You can bring your documents on a flash drive or on paper. The terminal will have a scanner where you can scan, save, and then use the computer to e-file your documents. To locate the clerk of the appellate court district where your appeal has been filed, click here: <http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/AppellateCourt/ClerksDefault.asp>

HOW TO FILE AN APPELLANT'S BRIEF

What is an *Appellant's Brief*?

- An *Appellant's Brief* tells the appellate court why the trial court should not have entered an order or judgment against you.

Who can use the *Appellant's Brief* form?

- The *Appellant's Brief* is filed by the appellant. If you filed the *Notice of Appeal*, you are the appellant. (Your opponent is called the appellee.)

When do I file the *Appellant's Brief* form?

- In general, your *Appellant's Brief* must be filed within 35 days after the date for filing the record on appeal or a certificate in lieu of record. However, in cases involving the best interests of a child, for example, the appellate court may shorten that time. Be sure to ask the appellate court clerk's office for the schedule that applies to your case. If you need additional time, you may file a *Motion* with the appellate court to ask for an extension. However, the appellate court is not required to give you an extension and may throw out your appeal if you do not file your *Brief* on time.
- For more information see the Guide for Appeals to the Illinois Appellate Court for Self Represented Litigants:
http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/CivilJustice/Resources/Guide_for_Appeals_to_the_IL_Appellate_Court_rev_0930.pdf

What costs will I need to pay to file my *Appellant's Brief* form?

- None, if you file in person; if you file by U.S. mail or third-party commercial carrier (e.g., FedEx or UPS), you will need to pay postage or delivery fees.

Is there a page or word limit?

- Yes. The *Appellant's Brief*—not including the cover, the statement of points and authorities, the certificate of compliance, and the appendix—must be no more than 50 pages or 15,000 words.
- If you need more than 50 pages or 15,000 words, you may file a *Motion* with the appellate court to ask for permission to file a *Brief* with more pages or words.

How do I fill out the *Appellant's Brief* form?

- If you can't fill out the form online, and if you must fill it out by hand, you must print neatly.
- The *Appellant's Brief* form contains several sections.
- The form contains instructions for each section. The sections are:

Cover

- Check the top box if the appeal involves the best interests of a child.
- Enter the appellate court case number (which you will

receive from the appellate court clerk) and the appellate court district.

- Provide the name of the trial court case. If the case was given a name beginning with "In re" (e.g., "In re Marriage of Jones"), enter that name. Then, enter the names of the plaintiff/petitioner (the party who filed the trial court case) and the defendant/respondent (the party against whom the case was filed). Finally, show which party is the appellant and which party is the appellee.
- Enter the trial court county, case number, and judge's name.
- Enter your name, address, and phone number. You may also enter your email address, but, if you do, the court may use it to send you important documents. Therefore, you should enter your email address only if you check your email frequently.
- Show whether you would like a chance to present oral argument (see Step 4 below).
- The cover must be printed on white paper.

Points and Authorities

- State the title of each argument (each reason why you think the trial court's decision or the jury's decision is wrong).
- List the authorities (cases, statutes (laws), etc.) that you will use to support each argument.
- You may raise as many arguments as you like, as long as they are reasonable.
- If you raise an unreasonable argument, the appellate court may strike the *Brief* or impose penalties.
- The form includes room for 3 arguments. If you will be raising additional arguments, you may fill out and add an *Additional Points and Authorities* form as the next page.

Nature of the Case

State why the lawsuit was filed and how the trial court or the jury ruled.

Issues Presented for Review

State the title of each argument again. The form includes room for 3 issues. If you are raising additional issues, you may fill out and add an *Additional Issues Presented for Review* form as the next page.

Jurisdiction

State why the appellate court has the power to hear your appeal.

- The appellate court has the power to hear an appeal only if the trial court's judgment is appealable under an Illinois Supreme Court Rule.
- Tell the appellate court which rule applies and why.
- State the filing dates of the trial court's judgment, its rulings on any motions that were filed after the judgment, and your *Notice of Appeal*, so the appellate court knows whether you filed your *Notice of Appeal* on time.

Statutes (Laws) Involved

State the language and the number (for example, 735 ILCS 5/2-615) of the statute (law) so others can find that language. The number of the statute (law) is also called the citation. If you need more room, you may fill out and add an *Additional Statutes (Laws) Involved* form as the next page.

Statement of Facts

Tell the appellate court what happened in the trial court from beginning to end. Include the page numbers of the record on appeal where the information you include is located. Do not argue or comment. If you need more room, you may fill out and add an *Additional Statement of Facts* form as the next page.

Argument

For each argument, state:

- The title of your argument;
- The standard of review (the level of deference the appellate court must give to the trial court or the jury);
- The law that applies to the case;
- How the law applies to the facts; and
- What you want the appellate court to do.

Include statutes (laws), rules, and cases that support your argument.

The form includes room for 3 arguments. The appellate court will not consider arguments that are vague or incomplete. If you are making more than 3 arguments, fill out and add an *Additional Argument* form after your 3rd argument.

Conclusion

State what you want the appellate court to do.

Certificate of Compliance

Certify that you have followed the rules for briefs, especially the page or word limit, by signing the Certificate of Compliance.

Appendix

Provide:

- An index to the record on appeal, including the common law record (the documents filed in the trial court); the report of proceedings (the transcript of the trial court hearings), if any; and the list of testifying witnesses;
- Copies of the plaintiff's complaint, the trial court's judgment, and your *Notice of Appeal*; and
- Copies of any other relevant materials from the record, noting those additions in the table of contents for the appendix. Do not remove and attach originals from the record.

If you need more room, you may fill out and add an *Additional Common Law Record*, *Additional Report of Proceedings*, or *Additional Index of Witnesses* form as the next page.

What do I do after I fill out the form?

Step 1: Send copies to all other parties.

- You must send 3 copies to each party, unless you are sending by e-mail, in which case you may send only 1 copy to each party. Do not send the original to a party.
- Fill out the 1st part, "Proof of Service to the Parties," of the *Proof of Service and Affidavit of Mailing* form to show how you will send the copies, according to the instructions for that form. Then send the copies, according to those same instructions.

Step 2: File your *Brief* with the appellate court.

- To file your *Brief*, deliver it to the appellate court clerk's office. Unless the appellate court's local rules say otherwise, deliver it in person, by U.S. mail, or by third-party commercial carrier. The address for the appellate court for your appeal may be on the court papers you received. You can also find the address at: <http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/AppellateCourt/ClerksDefault.asp>
- If you will file your *Brief* by U.S. mail or by third-party commercial carrier, fill out the 2nd part, "Affidavit of Mailing to the Court," of the *Proof of Service and Affidavit of Mailing* form to show how you will file it, according to the instructions for that form. Then file your *Brief*, according to those same instructions.
- File your original *Brief* and 8 copies (a total of 9 briefs), along with your *Proof of Service and Affidavit of Mailing*. Each *Brief* must be safely and securely bound on the left side, in a way that does not block the language. Keep another copy for yourself.
- **NOTE:** If you checked out the record on appeal to complete your *Brief*, return the record to the clerk of the appellate court by mail, third-party commercial carrier, or personal delivery when you file your brief. The record on appeal will then be forwarded to the appellee so that he or she can prepare the appellee's brief. After both parties' briefs are filed, the court will use the same record on appeal to decide the case. Therefore, while the record is in your possession, do not remove any document from the record or mark any page of the record in any way. Return the record to the appellate court clerk exactly as it was checked out to you.

Step 3: Wait for the appellee's brief.

- In general, the appellee's brief is due within 35 days after the due date for your *Appellant's Brief*. The appellee is not required to file a brief. The appellee's failure to file a brief does not mean that you will win the appeal.
- If the appellee files a brief, you may file a *Reply Brief*, which generally is due within 14 days after the due date for the appellee's brief. Again, ask the appellate court clerk's office for the schedule that applies to your case. You are not required to file a *Reply Brief*. Your failure to file a *Reply Brief* does not mean that you will lose the appeal.

Step 4: Wait for oral argument, if any.

- After all the briefs are filed, the appellate court may send you a notice to appear for oral argument, even if you did not ask for oral argument on the cover of your *Appellant's Brief*. (If you did ask for oral argument, the appellate court is not required have oral argument.) If you get a notice, arrive on time for the court date. When your appeal is called, explain your argument to the judges. Be prepared to answer any questions. After you argue, the appellee will get a chance to respond, and you will get a chance to reply.

Step 5: Wait for the appellate court's decision.

- The appellate court will send you a written decision. This might take several months.
- If you think that the appellate court overlooked or misunderstood any of your points, you may file a *Petition for Rehearing*, which is due within 21 days after the date of the decision. You must point out errors in the decision; you are not allowed to reargue your case.