

FAIRBORN MUNICIPAL COURT
SMALL CLAIMS
1148 KAUFFMAN AVE
FAIRBORN, OHIO 45324
www.fairbornmunicipalcourt.us

NOTE: Please be sure to provide the appropriate copies: The court will keep the original and you will need a copy for each defendant and a copy for yourself.

1. PARTIES

The individual or corporation who initiates an action is known as the PLAINTIFF. The individual or corporation against whom an action is brought is known as the DEFENDANT. Anyone may file a claim, however, a minor under the age of 18 must bring an action through his parent or legal guardian and a corporation must bring an action through an attorney at law, an officer, or a salaried employee. An officer or salaried employee of a corporation will not be allowed to engage in cross-examination, argument, or other acts of advocacy.

Special care and attention should be given when filing against a business or other organization to determine whether or not it is INCORPORATED. If the business is incorporated, you must name the exact corporate title of your defendant and serve the statutory agent. One method of determining whether an organization is incorporated and to locate the statutory agent is by contacting the Secretary of State Corporations Section (1-877-767-6446 OR AT SECRETARY OF STATE WEBSITE AT www.businesssearch.ohiosos.gov) to see if your defendant is listed. If the business is not incorporated, you must determine the owner or owners name (s), then file the complaint against the owners doing business as the name of the business (*example: John Doe dba John Doe's Plumbing*).

2. JURISDICTION - AMOUNT

The Small Claims Division has jurisdiction over claims FOR THE RECOVERY OF MONEY ONLY. The maximum allowable recovery amount by law is \$6,000.00. The claim amount does not include any interest or court costs. A Counterclaim may also be for any amount of \$6,000.00 or less.

The Court has jurisdiction over a claim if the defendant lives or the transaction occurred within the court's jurisdiction which is Fairborn, Beavercreek, Beavercreek Township and Bath Township, Ohio.

The Small Claims Division does not have jurisdiction over actions for libel; slander; replevin; alienation of affection; malicious prosecution; abuse of process; actions on any claim brought by an assignee, agent, or power of attorney; or actions for punitive or exemplary damages.

3. FACTS

Briefly describe what happened. If your property was damaged, describe what it was that was damaged as well as when and how it happened. If your claim is based upon a contract or agreement with the defendant, describe what you expected from the contract, as well as what the defendant failed to perform for you, and your loss. BE CONCISE AND ACCURATE. Your claim may be dismissed if essential information is omitted.

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4. EVIDENCE

You must provide the Court with copies of all documents, referred to as exhibits (receipts, contracts, checks, etc.) that substantiate your claim and a set for each defendant to be presented at the trial. The Court keeps all originals in accordance with the Court's retention policy. (Example: If you have 1 Defendant - you will need 2 sets of Exhibits. All exhibits submitted must be on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, this includes photos.

Written agreements, documents, photographs, flash drives, and tangible items are evidence as well as is your own testimony and testimony from your witnesses. The clerk will issue subpoenas for witnesses if requested. You must pay the witness fee and file your request at least **14 days** prior to your hearing date to give the bailiff or sheriff sufficient time to serve the witness with the subpoena.

Although you may prepare and present your case in any manner you see fit, you should have evidence to support your claim. And, although you believe that the defendant owes you a sum of money, your most important objective is to convince the Magistrate or Judge that your claim is valid. As the Plaintiff, you will have the BURDEN OF PROOF AND WILL BE EXPECTED TO PROVE YOUR CASE BY THE GREATER WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE.

Claims for property damage should always be accompanied by estimates of repair or loss. A MINIMUM OF TWO (2) ESTIMATES IS PREFERRED. Additionally, if damage is to your motor vehicle, YOU MUST PRESENT A CERTIFICATE OF TITLE AS EVIDENCE OF OWNERSHIP.

5. FILING FEE (New filings taken between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.)

The filing fee is \$75.00 for one Defendant and \$30.00 for each additional Defendant. (Cash, Check or Credit Card is accepted. (If paying by cash, please have correct amount). You will receive a receipt for your filing fee through email/mail along with a copy of your Small Claims Complaint. You will be assigned a date for trial upon filing the complaint. **YOU MUST APPEAR AT THE TRIAL OR YOUR CASE WILL BE DISMISSED.** IF YOU SETTLE OUT OF COURT BEFORE THE TRIAL, PLEASE NOTIFY THE SMALL CLAIMS DIVISION, 754-3044, AND REQUEST IN WRITING FOR THE CASE TO BE DISMISSED. Dismissal forms are on the Court's website if you wish to use it. The Dismissal must be signed by the Plaintiff.

6. SERVICE OF PROCESS

Before your case may proceed to trial, the Court or Magistrate must have evidence that the defendant has received notice of the complaint filed against him as well as notice of the trial date. In Ohio, the principal method of service is by certified mail. If the certified mail is returned unclaimed or refused, then you may request service by ordinary mail. In the event that there has been a failure to deliver notice to the defendant, the Small Claims Clerk will notify you by email/mail to obtain a current address of the defendant. You may also request that the Complaint and Summons be served by the bailiff if Defendant is located within the City of Beavercreek, Beavercreek Township, the City of Fairborn, or Bath Township. A praecipe form is on the Court's website. **The court costs must accompany the praecipe at the time of filing.** Please refer to the Court's website for the appropriate court cost amount.

THE SMALL CLAIMS DIVISION DOES NOT PROVIDE LOCATOR SERVICE FOR DEFENDANTS WITH AN UNKNOWN ADDRESS.

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7. TRANSFER

Just as you have elected to file your claim in the Small Claims Division of the Court rather than in the Civil Division, the Defendant may request the Court to transfer the case out of the Small Claims Division into the Civil Division. The Defendant may do this to preserve his right to a trial by jury and if he/she has a valid defense. Once transferred, the case will no longer be on the Small Claims Docket and a new trial date will be scheduled in the Civil Division. When a case is transferred into the Civil Division of the court the process to move a case to judgment is more involved and the Plaintiff may wish to consult with an attorney.

If the Plaintiff/Defendant does not wish to consult with an attorney, it may be in the best interest of the Parties to research the legal procedures necessary to go forward in the Civil Division of the Court.

8. TRIAL

Small Claims cases are heard at 1148 Kauffman Ave., Fairborn, Ohio. Enter the Court lobby on the trial date, check in at the Kiosk and/or with the bailiff in the lobby, and have a seat until your case is called. When called, walk in and have a seat at the table. At the trial, you will have an opportunity to present your arguments and your evidence to the Court. You will also have an opportunity to ask questions of the other parties and any witnesses in order to bring out points in your favor questions of you and your witnesses. PRESENT FACTS - NOT YOUR FEELINGS TOWARD THE OTHER PARTY. You will be provided a copy of the judgment by email/mail as soon as the decision is made.

9. AFTER JUDGMENT

If Judgment is rendered in your favor and you need assistance with the forms necessary to collect on a Judgment, these forms are available in the Small Claims Division of the Clerk's Office. There is a thirty-day period before you can proceed with collection of any judgment. The Magistrate or Judge is not permitted to advise you on how to collect a judgment during your trial. IF YOU OBTAIN A JUDGMENT IN YOUR FAVOR AND IT HAS BEEN PAID IN FULL, CALL THE COURT AND REQUEST IN WRITING AN ENTRY OF SATISFACTION. A form is also on the Court's website for your use. It must be signed by you before it is filed.

The Court cannot practice law for you or locate Defendant's assets such as bank accounts, names and addresses of employers, real estate, motor vehicles etc.

Small Claims cases are normally heard by a Magistrate. If you do not agree with the Magistrate's decision, you have fourteen (14) days from the date the decision is filed to file any objections. The filing of an objection will result in the decision being reviewed by a Judge. Failure to file any objections will result in the Magistrate's decision becoming the final Entry. The filing fee for an objection is \$30.00.