Illinois Small Claims Court Filing Checklist (2026)

From the $10,000 limit to collecting a judgment

Rule numbers are Illinois Supreme Court Rules. ILCS means Illinois Compiled Statutes. Guide: clearlegaltips.com/illinois-small-claims-court/ Check each box as you finish the step, and fill in the blanks as you go.

1. CHECK YOUR CLAIM

[ ] My claim is a civil action based on tort or contract for money not in excess of $10,000, exclusive of interest and costs (Rule 281).

Amount I am claiming ($): _____

2. PICK THE COUNTY AND THE PARTIES

[ ] I will file where a defendant lives or where the transaction, or some part of it, took place (735 ILCS 5/2-101).

County I am filing in: _____

Defendant's full name: _____

Defendant's address for service: _____

[ ] If a corporation is the claimant, counsel represents it. A corporation may not appear as claimant, assignee, subrogee or counterclaimant unless represented by counsel (Rule 282(b)).

3. CHECK THE DEADLINE

Date my claim arose: _____

Written contracts and promissory notes: 10 years (735 ILCS 5/13-206). Unwritten contracts and injury to property: 5 years (13-205). Contracts for the sale of goods: 4 years (810 ILCS 5/2-725). Injury to the person: 2 years (13-202).

Deadline I calculated: _____

4. WRITE THE COMPLAINT

[ ] My complaint gives my name, residence address and telephone number, the defendant's name and place of residence, business or regular employment, and the nature and amount of my claim with dates and other relevant information (Rule 282(a)).

[ ] If my claim rests on a written instrument, I attached a copy of it or of the relevant part, or an affidavit that it is unavailable (Rule 282(a)).

5. FILE AND PAY

[ ] I filed electronically, or I filed a Certification for Exemption From E-filing (Rule 9).

Filing fee from my county clerk's schedule ($): _____

[ ] If I cannot afford the fees, I used the Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Rule 298).

Case number: _____

Keep your filing receipt with your case number.

6. SUMMONS AND SERVICE

[ ] The summons names a day to appear not less than 40 or more than 61 days after issuance (Rule 283).

Court date on my summons: _____

[ ] Service will be made no later than 21 days before the day for appearance (Rule 102(b)).

Service method (sheriff, private person the court allows, or clerk's certified mail): _____

7. BEFORE THE COURT DATE

[ ] I read my summons for what the court expects on the first date. Rule 286 changes on January 1, 2027.

[ ] If I want a jury, I demand it when I file (plaintiff) or by the date the defendant must appear (defendant) (Rule 285).

[ ] I gathered the contract, payments, photos and repair estimates (see the evidence organizer).

8. AFTER THE JUDGMENT

Date the judgment was entered: _____

[ ] A notice of appeal goes to the clerk of the circuit court within 30 days after entry of the final judgment (Rule 303(a)(1)).

[ ] An appeal stays a money judgment only with a timely notice and an approved bond or other security (Rule 305(a)).

Last day to file a notice of appeal: _____

Collection tools: citation to discover assets (735 ILCS 5/2-1402), wage deduction (12-803), garnishment of other money (12-701) and a judgment lien on real estate, recorded in the county where the land is (12-101).

Notes: _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

This checklist is general information, not legal advice. Rule 286 changes on January 1, 2027 and county fees change, so check your clerk. Read the guide at clearlegaltips.com/illinois-small-claims-court/ for the details.