Pennsylvania Magisterial District Court Filing Checklist (2026)

From the $12,000 limit to collecting a judgment

MDJ means magisterial district judge. Rule numbers are Pa.R.Civ.P.M.D.J. rules. This checklist is for money claims in a magisterial district court outside Philadelphia. Guide: clearlegaltips.com/pennsylvania-small-claims-court/

1. CHECK YOUR CLAIM AND COURT

[ ] My claim is for money and the sum I demand is $12,000 or less, not counting interest and costs (42 Pa.C.S. §1515(a)(3)).

Amount I am claiming ($): _____

[ ] If I am owed more, I understand I may waive the part above $12,000, and that the waiver is revoked if the defendant appeals (42 Pa.C.S. §1515(a)(3)).

[ ] My claim is not an action by a landlord to recover possession of a home (Rule 301(b)).

[ ] My case is outside Philadelphia. In Philadelphia I will check the Philadelphia Municipal Court's own rules and forms first (42 Pa.C.S. §1123(a)(4)).

2. CHECK THE DEADLINE

Date my claim arose: _____

Contract claims generally have four years (42 Pa.C.S. §5525). Injury and property-damage claims have two years (42 Pa.C.S. §5524).

Deadline I calculated: _____

3. PICK THE DISTRICT AND THE PARTIES

[ ] For an individual defendant, the district is where the person may be served, where the cause of action arose, or where a transaction or occurrence took place out of which it arose (Rule 302(A)).

Magisterial district I am filing in: _____

Defendant's full name: _____

Defendant's address for service: _____

[ ] If a representative will appear for me, the Authorization of Representative and the written verification of personal knowledge are ready to file (Rule 207(B)).

4. COMPLETE THE CIVIL COMPLAINT

[ ] I used the state's current Civil Complaint form and did not change its content or format.

[ ] The complaint gives the names and addresses of the parties, the amount claimed, and a brief and concise statement of the facts (Rule 304(B)).

[ ] I understand my signature verifies that the facts are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief (18 Pa.C.S. §4904).

[ ] I have one copy of the complaint with my original signature for the magisterial district judge.

5. PAY THE COSTS

2026: $500 or less, $68.50. More than $500 up to $2,000, $91.00. More than $2,000 up to $4,000, $114.00. Between $4,001 and $12,000, $171.00. From January 1, 2027: $70.00, $93.50, $117.00 and $175.00 (204 Pa. Code §29.402; Pa. Bulletin vol. 56, no. 41). Landlord-tenant actions have their own amounts: $102.50, $125.50 and $171.00 in 2026, and $105.00, $128.50 and $175.00 from January 1, 2027. Postage and registered mail are extra.

Cost I paid ($): _____

[ ] If I cannot afford the costs, I asked about a waiver of certain fees and costs under Rule 206.1 (effective November 1, 2026).

6. HEARING DATE AND SERVICE

The hearing is set not less than 12 or more than 60 days from the date the complaint is filed (Rule 305(a)). Service must be made at least ten days before the hearing (Rule 307).

Hearing date: _____

Date the defendant was served, and how: _____

7. AT THE HEARING

[ ] I brought originals and copies of my documents in date order, and any witnesses. A bill, estimate, receipt or statement of account made in the regular course of business may be introduced without an affidavit (Rule 321).

[ ] I know that if the defendant does not appear, the judge enters judgment for the plaintiff or continues the case for cause (Rule 319(B)).

8. AFTER THE JUDGMENT

Date the judgment was entered: _____

Appeal: within 30 days after the date of entry, to the Court of Common Pleas (Rule 1002(A)). A plaintiff who appeals files a complaint within 20 days after filing the notice of appeal (Rule 1004(A)). Proof of service is due within 10 days after filing the notice of appeal (Rule 1005).

Last day to appeal (30 days after entry): _____

Order of execution: not before 30 days from entry and within five years (Rule 402(A)(1)). A levy reaches only tangible, nonperishable personal property (Rule 406). Wages in the employer's hands are exempt from attachment except in the cases listed in 42 Pa.C.S. §8127.

Earliest date for an order of execution: _____

Last date for an order of execution: _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

This checklist is general information, not legal advice. Pennsylvania court costs change each January and the Philadelphia Municipal Court has its own rules, so check the court. Read the guide at clearlegaltips.com/pennsylvania-small-claims-court/ for the details.