Small Claims Filing Checklist

The ten steps that work in nearly every state, plus an evidence list, with lines for your own dates and amounts

Use this with the state-by-state table at clearlegaltips.com/small-claims-court-filing-limits-and-fees/. The order below fits most courts. Your state may add or skip a step, so read the court's own instructions too.

Before you file

[ ] Demand letter sent with the amount, the reason and a payment deadline (keep a copy)

[ ] Statute of limitations checked for your state and type of claim

[ ] Limit checked in the table, and the right court chosen

State and county where you will file: _____

State limit from the table ($): _____

Amount you are claiming ($): _____

Last day you can file (date): _____

Filing

[ ] County picked: where the defendant lives or does business, where the contract was signed, or where the damage happened

[ ] Defendant's full legal name or exact registered business name confirmed

[ ] Claim form completed and filing fee paid (or fee waiver requested)

Filing fee quoted by the clerk ($): _____

Case number: _____

[ ] Defendant served by the method your court allows (clerk mail, sheriff or constable, or process server)

Date service was completed: _____

Evidence to bring, in date order

[ ] Contract, invoice or written agreement

[ ] Receipts, canceled checks or bank records

[ ] Photos or video

[ ] Texts and emails

[ ] Repair estimates or bills that prove the amount

[ ] Your demand letter and proof it was sent

[ ] Copies of everything for the judge and the other side

Hearing and after

Hearing date and time: _____

- [ ] Arrived early with documents in order
- [ ] Settlement (if any) put in writing, signed by both sides
- [ ] Collection plan ready: where the defendant works, banks and owns property

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

This checklist is general information, not legal advice. Rules differ by state and change over time, so confirm details with the court clerk. Full guide: clearlegaltips.com/small-claims-court-filing-limits-and-fees/