

U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
Instructions to a Prisoner Pro Se Plaintiff

Your suit was filed and has been assigned case number _____. The Court has directed service of your complaint. These instructions do not include everything you need to know to pursue your case, but following them may help you avoid common mistakes.

Filing and Serving Generally - After a defendant has been served with your complaint, you must serve a copy of all other documents and motions you file with the Court on the attorney for defendant (or on the defendant if the defendant is pro se). You can serve your papers by mail (or as otherwise authorized by Rule 5 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure). All documents and motions you file must contain a Certificate of Service reflecting that you served the defendant. This is an example of language you may use:

I hereby certify that on [insert date], I forwarded a copy of the foregoing document to [insert name of defendant's attorney or pro se defendant], at the address of [insert mailing address].

[Signature]

If you want a file-stamped copy of the document you filed with the Court, submit the original, and an extra copy to be returned to you. The clerk cannot make copies for you unless you first pay a fee of 50 cents per page.

You must type or legibly handwrite (with dark ink if possible) your documents on one side of sequentially numbered pages. Any exhibit or discovery material attached to the filing must be referred to in the filing. Any exhibit or discovery material not referred to in your filing or not attached to your filing may be returned to you.

You must place your case number on all documents you file. If you have more than one case and are filing the same document in each case, you must prepare separate documents to file in each case.

You must remove certain personal identifying information in all papers filed with the Court, including: dates of birth, names of minor children, and social security, financial account, passport, and driver license numbers.

Filing Motions - If you want the Court to take an action, you must file a written motion stating what you want the Court to do, provide your reasons for the action, and serve a copy of your motion on defendant or defendant's attorney. Place the title of your motion in the caption along with a noting date for the Court to review your motion:

- **Note** these motions **for the day** they are filed: (1) stipulated, agreed, and joint submissions; (2) request for over-length pleading; (3) reconsideration; (4) default;
- **Note** these motions **three Fridays** after filing: (1) other non-dispositive motions; (2) relief from deadline; (3) protective order; (4) seal; (5) default (where opposing party has appeared); (6) to compel discovery; (7) quash.
- **Note** these motions **four Fridays** after filing: (1) dispositive motions (dismissal and summary judgment); (2) preliminary injunctions.

Change of Address – You must inform the Court and opposing parties promptly if you change your address. If you fail to do so, your case may be dismissed.

Discovery Materials - Do **not** file discovery materials (*i.e.*, interrogatories, requests for production and/or admissions). If you file a motion to compel discovery, you may attach only the portions of discovery that are relevant to your motion.

Questions About Your Case - Do **not** write letters to the District Judge or Magistrate Judge asking questions about your case - all communication with the Court should be through motions. Do **not** write letters to the Clerk asking for instructions on how to handle your case as the Clerk is prohibited from giving legal advice.

Lack of Action - It is important that you take action after you start your lawsuit. If more than one year passes without any activity, the Court may dismiss your case for lack of prosecution.