
This booklet is intended to help you communicate effectively with your lawyer. The best time to talk to your lawyer about effective communication is before there is a problem.

When choosing a lawyer, think about how well you can communicate with each other. A lawyer's willingness and ability to talk to you in language you understand is very important. Legal matters can be complex, and you will be relying on your lawyer to help you understand what is going on and to answer your questions.

When you hire a lawyer, you should expect that he or she will keep you reasonably informed about the status of your legal matter. Your lawyer should also promptly comply with reasonable requests for information. He or she should explain things so you have the information you need to make informed decisions. Remember that reasonable communication might not mean immediate or constant communication, depending on the circumstances.

If Your Problem Is Not Resolved

Although they cannot offer you legal advice, the Washington State Bar Association Office of Disciplinary Counsel Consumer Affairs paralegals may be able to help you. If you follow the steps in this pamphlet and receive no response from your lawyer within a reasonable time, please call 206-727-8207 or 800-945-9722, and leave a message for a Consumer Affairs paralegal. Your call will be returned as soon as possible.

This pamphlet was prepared as a public service by the Washington State Bar Association. It contains general information and is not intended to apply to any specific situation. If you need legal advice or have questions about the application of the law in a particular matter, you should consult a lawyer.

Lawyer Referral Service

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Clark County | 360-695-0599 |
| King County | 206-623-2551 |
| Kitsap County | 360-373-2426 |
| Lewis County | 360-748-0430 |
| Pierce County | 253-383-3432 |
| Snohomish County | 425-388-3018 |



WSBA

Washington State Bar Association

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Communicating
with ←
Your
→ *Lawyer*



WSBA

Consumer Information
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Agree on a Method of Communication

At the beginning of your representation by a lawyer, it is best to agree on the most effective method of communication — telephone calls, letters, faxes, e-mails, and/or office visits. You may also have contacts with the lawyer's paralegal or support staff. Be sure you know whether or not you will be charged for the time you spend communicating with your lawyer and his or her staff. If there is a charge, make sure you know what it will be in advance.

How often and how much you communicate with your lawyer may depend on several factors:

- how long you have been represented by the lawyer;
- the nature of your legal matter; and
- your needs as a client.

Be aware that your lawyer will expect you to receive his or her communications if they are being handled in the manner agreed. You should notify your lawyer if you move, or if the way you want to communicate with him or her changes.

If There Is a Problem

If communication with your lawyer breaks down, we suggest that you write a letter to your lawyer. Also, we suggest that you write a letter to your lawyer if you have a question about the lawyer's billing or difficulty obtaining your client file at the end of the lawyer's representation.

You might want to send your letter by return-receipt certified mail and keep a copy. Here are sample letters — not all parts need to be included and you should make the letter fit your situation.

If You Have a Communication Problem Only

[Date]

Dear _____ [name of lawyer]:

I have been trying to reach you by _____ [phone, letter, fax, e-mail] since _____ [date] to find out about _____.

It has been _____ [number of weeks or months] since we last communicated.

On _____ [date], I _____ [signed documents and mailed them to you][other]. You said that you would contact me by _____ [date]. _____ [number of weeks or months] have passed and I have not heard from you.

This is important to me because _____.

Please contact me at _____ [phone number, address, fax number, e-mail address][other].

I know that I can seek assistance from the Washington State Bar Association but I would prefer to resolve this with you directly.

Sincerely,

[your name]

If Your Communication Problem Involves a Billing Question

[Date]

Dear _____ [name of lawyer]:

Please explain _____ [how much of my fee has been used][how much I owe you][other].

I do not understand _____ [certain items in your bill dated _____][the following charges][other].

Please contact me at _____ [phone number, address, fax number, e-mail address][other].

I know that I can seek assistance from the Washington State Bar Association but I would prefer to resolve this with you directly.

Sincerely,

[your name]

If Your Communication Problem Involves Return of Your Client File

[Date]

Dear _____ [name of lawyer]:

I need a copy of my client file to proceed with my case. Please let me know _____ [when it will be ready for me][when it will be ready for my new lawyer, whose name is _____].

Please contact me at _____ [phone number, address, fax number, e-mail address][other].

I know that I can seek assistance from the Washington State Bar Association but I would prefer to resolve this with you directly.

Sincerely,

[your name]