

SC-500-INFO COVID-19 Rental Debt in Small Claims Court

Beginning **November 1, 2021**, a landlord has the option to bring an action in small claims court to recover COVID-19 rental debt that is more than the normal limits for small claims actions. The purpose of bringing these claims in small claims court is to resolve disputes about COVID-19 rental debt. The small claims court **cannot** determine possession of residential property or evict a tenant from property.

What is COVID-19 rental debt?

COVID-19 rental debt means any unpaid rent or any other money owed under a residential lease or residential rental agreement (for example, parking fees or utility payments) that came due between **March 1, 2020, and September 30, 2021**.

What is small claims court?

Small claims court is a special court where disputes are resolved quickly and inexpensively. The rules are simple and informal. You may ask a lawyer for advice before you go to court, but you cannot have a lawyer in court.

Who are the parties in a small claims case?

- The person who sues is the plaintiff, the **landlord** in these cases. If the landlord is a business, an employee such as a property manager may go to a small claims trial for the landlord (use form SC-109, Authorization to Appear).
- The person who is sued is the defendant, the **tenant** in these cases. There may be more than one tenant paying rent for a single residence. The landlord may want to name all tenants as defendants.

How does a COVID-19 rental debt case start in the small claims court?

The landlord must:

- Complete and file form SC-500, Plaintiff's Claim and ORDER to Go to Small Claims Court (COVID-19 Rental Debt);
- Attach documentation showing the landlord's good-faith efforts to seek rental assistance (examples of documentation include emails, texts, and notes from phone calls); and
- Serve the form on the tenants (see form SC-100-INFO, Information for the Plaintiff).

How does a tenant respond?

A tenant does not need to file any papers before the trial date. Tenants should go to court on the day of trial with evidence about the amount of COVID-19 rental debt owed, if any.

What should tenant take to small claims court for a COVID-19 rental debt case?

Both the landlord and the tenant in a small claims action for COVID-19 rental debt can present arguments and evidence about how much money they believe is owed, how much has already been paid, and other factors that can affect the amount of COVID-19 rental debt that must be paid.

The parties should bring the rental agreement, any rental receipts, and any other receipts or other documents that show the following:

- The **amounts** of COVID-19 rental debt owed and the **dates** on which each amount came due. Remember that COVID-19 rental debt means rent and other financial obligations that came due between **March 1, 2020, and September 30, 2021**.
- Any amounts that the tenant **paid** toward the rent or other financial obligations and the **dates of payment**.
- Any other amounts of rent or other obligations that were paid through rental assistance programs or other third parties on behalf of the tenant.
- Any evidence of conditions affecting the residence, such as items needing repair.
- Any evidence to support arguments made to determine the amount of money owed.

Page 2 of this information sheet provides a list of some of the arguments that landlords and tenants can make to help the court determine the amount of COVID-19 rental debt that is owed.

Can you bring a witness to small claims court?

Both the landlord and the tenant may bring witnesses to the trial who can tell the court what they know about the COVID-19 rental debt, the condition of the home, and agreements between the landlord and the tenant about the need for repairs and payment for repairs.

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What arguments can you make?

The landlord and tenant may disagree about the amount of rent that is owed for various reasons. Read more about these reasons in the California Department of Real Estate's guide at landlordtenant.dre.ca.gov/resources/guidebook/index.html, in the "[Living in the Rental Unit](#)" and "[Dealing with Problems](#)" sections. Below are questions that can help you identify the issues that may exist in the case and may affect the amount of rent owed.

Please note: This list does not include every possible argument. Other laws, including local ordinances, may affect the rights of landlords and tenants in COVID-19 rental debt cases.

- Did landlord make a good-faith effort to:
 - Investigate whether governmental rental assistance is available to the tenant;
 - Seek governmental rental assistance for the tenant; or
 - Cooperate with the tenant's efforts to obtain rental assistance from any governmental entity or other third party under Civil Code section 1947.3(a)(3)?
- Is there any pending application for rental assistance or other financial compensation from any other source corresponding to the amount claimed?
- Did landlord receive rental assistance or other financial compensation from any other source corresponding to the amount claimed?
- Did landlord improperly apply payments to past-due rent without the tenant's written agreement?
- Does the amount claimed include service fees that were increased or not previously charged?
- Does the amount claimed include late fees on rent or other financial obligations?
- Did landlord improperly raise the rent?
- Did tenant or a third party offer a rental payment that landlord would not accept?
- If the lease or rental agreement was terminated, was the security deposit returned? Read more about the rules for security deposits at www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp-eviction-security-deposits.htm.
- Did tenant make needed repairs and properly deduct the cost from the rent? If so, did landlord give proper credit?
- Did landlord fail to provide habitable premises? This means that if the housing did not meet certain standards, the amount owed may be reduced.

Note: It is illegal for a landlord to retaliate against a tenant for raising any of the above issues or any of the defenses listed on form [UD-105, Answer—Unlawful Detainer](#).

Can a tenant file a claim in the landlord's case?

A tenant who is a defendant in a COVID-19 rental debt case may bring a claim against the landlord in the same case using form [SC-120, Defendant's Claim and ORDER to Go to Small Claims Court](#).

What if you disagree with the court's decision?

If you are a tenant, you may appeal the decision on a claim filed against you. More information about appeals is available in the information at the end of [Plaintiff's Claim and ORDER to Go to Small Claims Court \(COVID-19 Rental Debt\)](#) (form SC-500) and at www.courts.ca.gov/smallclaims/appeals.

If you are the landlord, you cannot appeal a small claims decision on a claim you filed. (Note that a landlord has the option of filing a COVID-19 rental debt recovery case in general civil court [use form [Complaint—Recovery of COVID-19 Rental Debt](#) (form PLD-C-500)]. In general civil court, all parties may appeal the court's decision and all parties may be represented by lawyers.)

How much does it cost to file a case in small claims court?

The amount the court charges a landlord to file a case in small claims court depends on the amount demanded and how many cases are brought by the landlord in a single year. The filing fees for small claims cases are listed on the Statewide Civil Fee Schedule, available at www.courts.ca.gov/7646.htm. There is no fee for the tenant to go to the hearing.

What if you cannot afford the filing fee?

If you want to sue someone in small claims court and cannot afford to pay court fees and costs, you may not have to pay. The court may waive all or part of those fees **if you:** Are getting public benefits; **or**

- Are a person with very low income; **or**
- Do not have enough income to pay for your household's basic needs and your court fees.

To ask the court to waive your fees in small claims court, complete form FW-001, Request to Waive Court Fees. File your request with the court.

Where can you get help with a small claims case?

- **Small Claims Advisors.** Every county has a Small Claims Advisor who is available to help you with your small claims case. These services are free. To find the Small Claims Advisor in your county, go to www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp-advisors.htm.
- **Forms and online help.** You can find small claims forms and more information about small claims court at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center www.courts.ca.gov/smallclaims. You can also get forms and help at your county law library or the courthouse nearest you.
- **Local court websites.** Your local court may have additional information and help for your small claims matter. Visit your court's website for current information on small claims hearing procedures. For help finding your court, visit www.courts.ca.gov/find-my-court.htm.
- **Legal services organizations.** Local organizations may be able to assist parties in preparing for court. Parties may be able to find a legal service organization that serves their area at <http://lawhelpca.org/>.
- **Lawyers.** Both parties may ask a lawyer about the case, but a lawyer may not represent either party in court at the small claims trial. Generally, after judgment and on appeal, both parties may be represented by lawyers.

What help is available when you go to court?

- **Accommodations for disability.** If you have a disability and need an accommodation while you are at court:
 - You can use form MC-410, Disability Accommodation Request, to tell the court about your needs.
 - For more information about making a disability accommodation request, see form MC-410-INFO, How to Request a Disability Accommodation for Court.
 - Remember to submit your request to the ADA Coordinator or designated person in your court.
 - Visit your court's website to find the ADA Coordinator or designated person. For help finding your court, go to www.courts.ca.gov/find-my-court.htm.
- **Interpreters.** If you do not speak English well:
 - Ask the court clerk as soon as possible for a court-provided interpreter.
 - You may use form INT-300, Request for Interpreter (Civil), or a local court form to request an interpreter.
 - If no court interpreter is available at the time of your trial, it may be necessary to reschedule your trial.
 - You cannot bring your own interpreter for the trial unless the interpreter has been approved by the court as a certified, registered, or provisionally qualified interpreter. See Cal. Rules of Court, rule 2.893, and form INT-140, Temporary Use of a Noncertified or Nonregistered Spoken Language Interpreter.

Who can look at your case file?

If you are sued in small claims court for nonpayment of COVID-19 rental debt, only the following people may see the case file:

- The parties (landlords and tenants).
- A person who gives the court clerk the name of at least one landlord and one tenant.
- A person who lives in the residence for which COVID-19 rental debt is owed who shows proof of residency and gives the clerk the case number or the name of one of the parties.
- A person who gets an order from the court after showing that they have good cause to see the case file.

SC-500**Plaintiff's Claim and ORDER to Go to Small Claims Court (COVID-19 Rental Debt)**

Clerk stamps date here when form is filed.

THIS IS AN ACTION TO RECOVER COVID-19 RENTAL DEBT AS DEFINED UNDER CODE OF CIVIL PROCEDURE, § 1179.02. ACCESS TO RECORDS IN THIS CASE IS LIMITED UNDER CODE OF CIVIL PROCEDURE, § 1161.2.5.

Notice to the person being sued:

- You are the defendant if your name is listed in ② of this form or on form SC-500A. The person suing you is the plaintiff, listed in ①.
- You and the plaintiff must go to court on the trial date listed below. If you do not go to court, you may lose the case. If you lose, the court can order that your wages, money, or property be taken to pay this claim. (**Note: This small claims case cannot result in your eviction.**) Bring witnesses, receipts, and any other evidence you need to prove your case.
- Read this form and all pages attached to understand the claim against you and to protect your rights, and read SC-500-INFO, COVID-19 Rental Debt in Small Claims Court for more information, at www.courts.ca.gov/forms.

Fill in court name and street address:

Superior Court of California, County of

Aviso al Demandado:

- Usted es el Demandado si su nombre figura en ② de la página 2 de este formulario, o en el formulario SC-500A. La persona que lo demanda es el Demandante, la que figura en ① de la página 2.
- Usted y el Demandante tienen que presentarse en la corte en la fecha del juicio indicada a continuación. Si no se presenta, puede perder el caso. Si pierde el caso, la corte podría ordenar que le quiten de su sueldo, dinero u otros bienes para pagar este reclamo. (**Nota: Este caso de reclamos menores no puede resultar en un desalojo.**) Lleve testigos, recibos y cualquier otra prueba que necesite para probar su caso.
- Lea este formulario y todas las páginas adjuntas para entender la demanda en su contra y para proteger sus derechos, y lea SC-500-INFO, *La deuda de alquiler del COVID-19 en la corte de reclamos menores* para más información, en www.courts.ca.gov/forms.

Court fills in case number when form is filed.

Case Number:

Case Name:

Order to Go to Court**The people in ① and ② must go to court:** (Clerk fills out section below.)

Trial Date	→ Date	Time	Department	Name and address of court, if different from above
	1. _____	_____	_____	_____
	2. _____	_____	_____	_____
	3. _____	_____	_____	_____
	Date: _____		Clerk, by _____, Deputy	

Instructions for the person suing:

- You are the plaintiff. The person you are suing is the defendant.
- Before** you fill out this form, read forms SC-500-INFO and SC-100-INFO to know your rights. Get the forms at any courthouse or county law library, or go to www.courts.ca.gov/forms.
- Fill out pages 2, 3, and 4 of this form. Make copies of all the pages of this form and any attachments—one for each party named in this case and an extra copy for yourself. Take or mail the original and the copies to the court clerk's office and pay the filing fee. The clerk will write the date of your trial in the box above. Your court may allow electronic filing. Check your local court website for information: www.courts.ca.gov/find-my-court.htm.
- You must have someone at least 18—not you or anyone else listed in this case—give each defendant a court-stamped copy of all pages of this form and any pages this form tells you to attach. See forms SC-104 and SC-104B.
- Go to court on your trial date listed above.** Bring witnesses, receipts, and any evidence you need to prove your case.



Plaintiff (list names):

Case Number: _____

1 The plaintiff (the person, business, or public entity that is suing) is:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street address: _____
Street City State Zip

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

Email address (if available): _____

If more than one plaintiff, list next plaintiff here:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street address: _____
Street City State Zip

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

Email address (if available): _____

Check here if more than two plaintiffs and attach form SC-500A.

Check here if either plaintiff listed above is doing business under a fictitious name and attach form SC-103.

2 The defendant (the person being sued) is:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street address: _____
Street City State Zip

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

If more than one defendant, list next defendant here:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street address: _____
Street City State Zip

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

Check here if more than two defendants and attach form SC-500A.

Check here if any defendant is on active military duty and write defendant's name here:



Plaintiff (list names):

Case Number: []

3 The plaintiff claims the defendant owes \$ _____ for COVID-19 rental debt (unpaid rent or other financial obligations of a tenant that came due in the period from March 1, 2020, to September 30, 2021). (Code Civ. Proc., § 1179.02.) (Explain amount below.)

a. Rent. List all rent you claim defendant owes that came due in the period from March 1, 2020, to September 30, 2021. For each month you claim rent is due, include each amount due and the date it came due.

[]

b. Other amounts of COVID-19 rental debt. List all unpaid financial obligations under the lease or rental agreement (other than rent) that you claim defendant owes and that came due during the period in (a) above. For each month you claim other financial obligations are due, include each amount, the date it came due, and what it was for (for example, parking fees or utilities included as part of the rental agreement).

[]

[] Check here if you need more space. Attach one sheet of paper or form MC-031, and write "SC-500, Item 3" at the top.

4 Amounts paid or offsets

List any amounts you received from defendant, rental assistance programs, and other third parties that you have already credited, and any other amounts you have offset or credited, for rent or other financial obligations due between March 1, 2020, and September 30, 2021, that you are not claiming in item 3 above. Include each amount, when it was paid or credited, and what it was for.

[]

[] Check here if you need more space. Attach one sheet of paper or form MC-031, and write "SC-500, Item 4" at the top.

5 You must ask the defendant (in person, in writing, or by phone) to pay you before you sue. Have you done this?

[] Yes [] No If no, explain why not:

[]



Plaintiff (list names):

Case Number:

6 Why are you filing your claim at this courthouse?

This courthouse covers the area (check one that applies):

- a. Where the defendant lives or does business.
- b. Where the rental agreement, lease, or contract (written or spoken) was made, signed, performed, or broken by the defendant or where the defendant lived or did business when the defendant made the contract.
- c. Other (specify):

7 List the zip code of the place checked in 6 above (if you know it): _____

8 Have you filed more than 12 other small claims within the last 12 months in California?

Yes No If yes, the filing fee for this case will be higher.

9 Plaintiff must make a good-faith effort to help defendant obtain rental assistance before filing this case. Check all that apply below. You must also attach documentation of those efforts or, if you do not have documentation, describe your effort below.

Plaintiff made a good-faith effort to help defendant obtain rental assistance before filing this case, as required under Code of Civil Procedure section 871.10(a), by:

- a. Investigating whether governmental rental assistance is available to the tenant;
 - b. Seeking governmental rental assistance for the tenant; or
 - c. Cooperating with the tenant's efforts to obtain rental assistance from any governmental entity or other third party.
- Check here if documentation is attached. If not attached, describe your efforts below.
- _____
- _____
- _____

10 I understand that the court cannot issue a judgment for me if I have received rental assistance for the amounts I am claiming from defendant. (Both statements must be true.)

- a. I have not received rental assistance or other financial compensation from any other source corresponding to any of the amount claimed in item 3 above; and
- b. I do not have any application pending for rental assistance or other financial compensation from any other source corresponding to any of the amount claimed in item 3 above.

11 I understand that by filing a claim in small claims court, I have no right to appeal this claim.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the information above and on any attachments to this form is true and correct.

Date: _____ *Plaintiff types or prints name here*  _____ *Plaintiff signs here*

Date: _____ *Second plaintiff types or prints name here*  _____ *Second plaintiff signs here*



Requests for Accommodations

Assistive listening systems, computer-assisted real-time captioning, or sign language interpreter services are available if you ask at least five days before the trial. For these and other accommodations, contact the clerk's office for Disability Accommodation Request (form MC-410). (Civ. Code, § 54.8.)



"Small claims court" is a special court where generally only claims for \$12,500 or less are decided. This limitation has been lifted for cases for recovery of COVID-19 rental debt.* The process is quick and cheap. The rules are simple and informal. You are the *defendant*—the person being sued. The person who is suing you is the *plaintiff*.

Do I need a lawyer? You may talk to a lawyer before or after the case. But you *may not* have a lawyer represent you in court (unless this is an appeal from a small claims case).

How do I get ready for court? Read form [SC-500-INFO, COVID-19 Rental Debt in Small Claims Court](#). You don't have to file any papers before your trial, unless you think this is the wrong court for your case. But bring to your trial any witnesses, receipts, and evidence that support your case. And read "Be Prepared for Your Trial" at www.courts.ca.gov/smallclaims/prepare.

Where can I get the court forms I need? Go to any courthouse or your county law library, or get forms at www.courts.ca.gov/forms.

What if I need an accommodation? If you have a disability or are hearing impaired, fill out form [MC-410, Disability Accommodation Request](#). Give the form to your court clerk or the ADA/Access Coordinator.

What if I don't speak English well? Ask the court clerk as soon as possible for a court-provided interpreter. You may use form [INT-300, Request for Interpreter \(Civil\)](#), or a local court form to request an interpreter. If a court interpreter is unavailable for your trial, it may be necessary to reschedule your trial. You cannot bring your own interpreter for the trial unless the interpreter has been approved by the court as a certified, registered, or provisionally qualified interpreter. (See Cal. Rules of Court, rule 2.893, and form [INT-140](#).)

What happens at the trial? The judge will listen to both sides. The judge may make a decision at your trial or mail the decision to you later.

What if I lose the case? If you lose, you may appeal. You'll have to pay a fee. (Plaintiffs cannot appeal their own claims.)

- If you were at the trial, file form [SC-140, Notice of Appeal](#). You must file within 30 days after the clerk hands or mails you the judge's decision (judgment) on form [SC-200](#) or form [SC-130, Notice of Entry of Judgment](#).
- If you were *not* at the trial, fill out and file form [SC-135, Notice of Motion to Vacate Judgment and Declaration](#), to ask the judge to cancel the judgment (decision). If the judge does not give you a new trial, you have 10 days to appeal the decision. File form [SC-140](#).

For more information on appeals, see www.courts.ca.gov/smallclaims/appeals.

Do I have options? Yes. If you are being sued, you can:

- **Settle your case before the trial.** If you and the plaintiff agree on how to settle the case before the trial, the plaintiff must file form [CIV-110, Request for Dismissal](#) or a written and signed settlement agreement with the clerk. Ask the Small Claims Advisor for help.

- **Prove this is the wrong court.** *Send a letter to the court before your trial explaining why you think this is the wrong court.* Ask the court to dismiss the claim. You must serve (give) a copy of your letter (by mail or in person) to all parties. (Your letter to the court must say you have done so.)
- **Go to the trial and try to win your case.** Bring witnesses, receipts, and any evidence you need to prove your case. To have the court order a witness to go to the trial, fill out form [SC-107, Small Claims Subpoena and Declaration](#) and have it served on the witness.
- **Sue the person who is suing you.** If you have a claim against the plaintiff, and the claim is for \$12,500 or less, you may file *Defendant's Claim and ORDER to Go to Small Claims Court* (form [SC-120](#)) and bring the claim in this action. If your claim is for *more* than allowed in small claims court, you may still file it in small claims court if you give up the amount over the small claims value amount, or you may file a claim for the full value of the claim in the appropriate court. If your claim is for more than allowed in small claims court *and* relates to the same contract, transaction, matter, or event that is the subject of the plaintiff's claim, you may file your claim in the appropriate court and file a motion to transfer the plaintiff's claim to that court to resolve both matters together. You can see a description of the amounts allowed in the paragraph above, titled "**Small Claims Court.**"
- **Agree with the plaintiff's claim and pay the money.** Or, if you can't pay the money now, go to your trial and say you want to make payments.
- **Let the case "default."** If you don't settle and do not go to the trial (default), the judge may give the plaintiff what he or she is asking for plus court costs. If this happens, the plaintiff can legally take your money, wages, and property to pay the judgment. (But not your rental unit; this is not an eviction case.)

What if I need more time?

You can change the trial date if:

- You cannot go to court on the scheduled date (you will have to pay a fee to postpone the trial), *or*
- You did not get served (receive this order to go to court) at least 15 days before the trial (or 20 days if you live outside the county).

Ask the Small Claims Clerk about the rules and fees for postponing a trial. Or fill out form [SC-150](#) (or write a letter) and mail it to the court *and* to all other people listed on your court papers before the deadline. Enclose a check for your court fees, unless a fee waiver was granted.



Need help?

Your county's Small Claims Advisor can help for free.



Or go to www.courts.ca.gov/smallclaims/advisor.

*Limits do not apply in an action to recover COVID-19 rental debt, which is unpaid rent or other financial obligations of a tenant that are due between March 1, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2021. (See Code Civ. Proc., §§ 116.223 & 1179.02.) Read [SC-500-INFO, COVID-19 Rental Debt in Small Claims Court](#).



La “Corte de reclamos menores” es una corte especial donde generalmente se deciden casos por \$12,500 o menos. Se suspendió este límite para acciones para reclamar una deuda de alquiler del COVID-19.* El proceso es rápido y económico. Las reglas son sencillas e informales. Usted es el Demandado—la persona que se está demandando. La persona que lo está demandando es el Demandante.

¿Necesito un abogado? Puede hablar con un abogado antes o después del caso. Pero no puede tener a un abogado que lo represente ante la corte (a menos que se trate de una apelación de un caso de reclamos menores).

¿Cómo me preparo para ir a la corte? Lea el formulario SC-500-INFO, *La deuda de alquiler del COVID-19 en la corte de reclamos menores*. No tiene que presentar ningún documento antes del juicio, a menos que piense que ésta es la corte equivocada para su caso. Pero lleve al juicio los testigos, recibos y pruebas que apoyan su caso. Y lea “Esté preparado para su juicio” en www.courts.ca.gov/reclamosmenores/preparesse.

¿Dónde puedo obtener los formularios de la corte que necesito? Vaya a cualquier edificio de la corte, la biblioteca legal de su condado, o imprima los formularios en www.courts.ca.gov/smallclaims/forms (página está en inglés).

¿Qué hago si necesito una modificación? Si tiene una discapacidad o tiene impedimentos de audición, puede llenar el formulario MC-410, *Solicitud de modificaciones para discapacidad*. Entregue el formulario al secretario de la corte o al Coordinador de Acceso/ADA de su corte.

¿Qué pasa si no hablo bien inglés? Solicite un intérprete al secretario de la corte lo más pronto posible. Puede usar el formulario INT-300 o un formulario de su corte local. Si no está disponible un intérprete de la corte para su juicio, es posible que se tenga que cambiar la fecha de su juicio. No puede llevar su propio intérprete para el juicio a menos que el intérprete haya sido aprobado por la corte como un intérprete certificado, registrado, o provisionalmente calificado. (Vea la regla 2.893 de las Reglas de la Corte de California, y el formulario INT-140.)

¿Qué pasa en el juicio? El juez escuchará a ambas partes. El juez puede tomar su decisión durante la audiencia o enviársela por correo después.

¿Qué pasa si pierdo el caso? Si pierde, puede apelar. Tendrá que pagar una cuota. (El Demandante no puede apelar su propio reclamo.)

- Si estuvo presente en el juicio, llene el formulario SC-140, *Aviso de apelación* (Notice of Appeal). Tiene que presentarlo dentro de 30 días después de que el secretario le entregue o envíe la decisión (fallo) del juez en el formulario SC-200 o SC-130, *Aviso de publicación del fallo* (Notice of Entry of Judgment).
- Si no estuvo en el juicio, llene y presente el formulario SC-135, *Aviso de petición para anular el fallo y Declaración* para pedirle al juez que anule el fallo (decisión). Si la corte no le otorga un nuevo juicio, tiene 10 días para apelar la decisión. Presente el formulario SC-140.

Para obtener más información sobre las apelaciones, vea www.courts.ca.gov/reclamosmenores/apelaciones.

¿Tengo otras opciones? Sí. Si lo están demandando, puede:

- **Resolver su caso antes del juicio.** Si usted y el Demandante se ponen de acuerdo en cómo resolver el caso antes del juicio, el Demandante tiene que presentar el formulario CIV-110 *Solicitud de desestimación* (Request for Dismissal) o un acuerdo de resolución escrito y firmado al secretario de la corte. Pídale al Asesor de Reclamos Menores que lo ayude.

- **Probar que es la corte equivocada.** Envíe una carta a la corte antes del juicio explicando por qué cree que es la corte equivocada. Pídale a la corte que despida el reclamo. Tiene que entregar (dar) una copia de su carta (por correo o en persona) a todas las partes. (Su carta a la corte tiene que decir que hizo la entrega.)
- **Ir al juicio y tratar de ganar el caso.** Lleve testigos, recibos y cualquier prueba que necesite para probar su caso. Si desea que la corte emita una orden de comparecencia para que los testigos vayan al juicio, llene el formulario SC-107, *Citatorio de reclamos menores* (Small Claims Subpoena) y entrégueselo legalmente al testigo.
- **Demandar a la persona que lo demandó.** Si tiene un reclamo contra el Demandante, y el reclamo se puede presentar en la corte de reclamos menores, tal como se describe en este formulario, puede presentar el formulario SC-120, *Reclamo del demandado* (Defendant's Claim) y presentarlo en este mismo caso. Si su reclamo excede el límite permitido en la corte de reclamos menores, puede igualmente presentarlo en la corte de reclamos menores si está dispuesto a limitar su reclamo al máximo permitido, o puede presentar un reclamo por el monto total en la corte apropiada. Si su reclamo excede el límite permitido en la corte de reclamos menores y está relacionado con el mismo contrato, transacción, asunto o acontecimiento que el reclamo del Demandante, puede presentar su reclamo en la corte apropiada y presentar una moción para transferir el reclamo del Demandante a dicha corte, para poder resolver los dos reclamos juntos. Puede ver una descripción de los montos permitidos en el párrafo anterior titulado “Corte de reclamos menores”.
- **Aceptar el reclamo del Demandante y pagar el dinero.** O, si no puede pagar en ese momento, vaya al juicio y diga que quiere hacer los pagos a plazos.
- **No ir al juicio y aceptar el fallo por falta de comparecencia.** Si no llega a un acuerdo con el Demandante y no va al juicio (fallo por falta de comparecencia), el juez le puede otorgar al Demandante lo que está reclamando más los costos de la corte. En ese caso, el Demandante legalmente puede tomar su dinero, su sueldo o sus bienes para cobrar el fallo. (Pero no su hogar alquilado; esto no es un caso de desalojo.)

¿Qué hago si necesito más tiempo? Puede cambiar la fecha del juicio si:

- No puede ir a la corte en la fecha programada (tendrá que pagar una cuota para aplazar el juicio), o
- No le entregaron los documentos legalmente (no recibió la orden para ir a la corte) por lo menos 15 días antes del juicio (o 20 días si vive fuera del condado).

Pregúntele al secretario de reclamos menores sobre las reglas y las cuotas para aplazar un juicio. O llene el formulario SC-150 (o escriba una carta) y envíelo antes del plazo a la corte y a todas las otras personas que figuran en sus papeles de la corte. Adjunte un cheque para pagar los costos de la corte, a menos que le hayan dado una exención.



¿Necesita ayuda? El Asesor de Reclamos Menores de su condado le puede ayudar sin cargo.

O visite www.courts.ca.gov/reclamosmenores/asesores.

*Los límites no se aplican a las acciones para reclamar una deuda de alquiler del COVID-19, que se define como alquiler u otras obligaciones financieras impagas de un inquilino que vencieron entre el 1 de marzo de 2020 y el 30 de septiembre de 2021. (Vea el Código de Procedimiento Civil, secciones 116.223 y 1179.02.) Lea el formulario SC-500-INFO, *La deuda de alquiler del COVID-19 en la corte de reclamos menores*.

This form is attached to form SC-500, item 1 or 2.**1 If more than two plaintiffs (person, business, or entity suing), list their information below:**

Other plaintiff's name: _____ Phone: _____

Street address: _____

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State ZipMailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

Email address (if available): _____

Is this plaintiff doing business under a fictitious name? Yes No If yes, attach form SC-103.

Other plaintiff's name: _____ Phone: _____

Street address: _____

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State ZipMailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

Email address (if available): _____

Is this plaintiff doing business under a fictitious name? Yes No If yes, attach form SC-103. Check here if more than four plaintiffs and fill out and attach another form SC-500A.**2 If more than two defendants (person being sued), list their information below:**

Other defendant's name: _____ Phone: _____

Street address: _____

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State ZipMailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

Other defendant's name: _____ Phone: _____

Street address: _____

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State ZipMailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip Check here if your case is against more than four defendants and fill out and attach another form SC-500A.**3 I understand that by filing a claim in small claims court, I have no right to appeal this claim.**

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the information above and on any attachments to this form is true and correct.

Date: _____

*Type or print your name*_____
Sign your name

Date: _____

*Type or print your name*_____
Sign your name

What is “service”?

“Service” or “serving” is when someone—*not you or anyone else listed in this case*—gives a copy of your court papers to the person, business, or public entity you are suing. Service lets the other party know:

- What you are asking for;
- When and where the trial will be; *and*
- What the party can choose to do

There are strict rules for serving court papers. This form explains how to serve these forms:

- Form SC-100, *Plaintiff’s Claim*
- Form SC-120, *Defendant’s Claim*
- Form SC-500, *Plaintiff’s Claim (COVID-19 Rental Debt)*

How is service done?

This form tells you how to serve by *personal* service or *substituted* service.

Personal service means someone gives the papers directly to the person being sued or to the agent authorized to accept service (business or public entity).

Substituted service means someone gives the papers to an adult where the person lives, works, or receives mail (including a private post office box, but not a U.S. Postal Service P.O. Box).

What if the court papers do not get served?

The judge cannot hear your case unless the court papers were served correctly.

Can the court serve the papers for me?

Yes. You can pay the court to mail your claim to the person you are suing. But if the person you are suing or the person’s agent for service doesn’t sign the U.S. Postal Service mail receipt with his or her complete name, or if someone else signs the receipt, you will have to serve again using personal or substituted service.

Who can serve?

You can ask a friend, a process server, or the sheriff. The server must be at least 18 and not listed in the case.

A “process server” is someone you pay to deliver court forms. Look in the *Yellow Pages* under “Process Serving.” The sheriff (or marshal if your county has one) can also deliver court forms. Ask the court clerk how to contact the sheriff. Or look in the county section of your phone book under “Sheriff.” You must pay the server, unless you qualify for a fee waiver.

How is *personal* service done?

Ask someone who is at least 18 and not listed in this case to personally “serve” (give) a copy of your court papers to the person or the agent authorized to accept court papers for the person, business, or public entity listed on Form SC-104.

Give the server a separate *Proof of Service* form for each person, business, or public entity you are suing. And tell the server to:

- Walk up to the person to be served.
- Say, “These are court papers.”
- Give the person copies of all papers checked on Form SC-104, *Proof of Service*. If the person won’t take the papers, just leave them near the person. It doesn’t matter if the person tears them up.
- Fill out and sign page 2 of form SC-104, *Proof of Service*.

How is *substituted* service done?

If you don’t want to use personal service or can’t find the person to be served, ask someone who is at least 18 and not listed in this case to serve the court papers.

Give the server a separate *Proof of Service* form for each person, business, or public entity you are suing. Tell the server to give the papers to:

- A competent adult (at least 18) at the home of and living with the person to be served *or*
- An adult who seems to be in charge where the person to be served usually works *or*
- An adult who seems to be in charge where the person receives mail (including a private mailbox, but **not** a U.S. Postal Service P.O. Box). *Note:* This is only for cases where the physical address of the person to be served is not known.

Then do the following:

- Write down that person’s name and say, “Please give these court papers to [*name of person to be served*].” If the person does not want to give his or her name, describe the person you served.
- Give that person copies of all papers checked on Form SC-104, *Proof of Service*. If the person won’t take the papers, just leave them near the person.
- Mail another copy of the papers (by first-class mail) to the person being sued at the same address where you left the papers.
- Fill out and sign page 2 of Form SC-104, *Proof of Service*.

SC-104B What Is “Proof of Service”?

What does the server do with the original *Proof of Service* form?

If a process server or sheriff served the papers, he or she can file form SC-104, *Proof of Service*, with the clerk. If the server used a different *Proof of Service* form, ask him or her to list each paper served on the form. Also make sure that the registered server will file the original directly with the court and will mail you a copy of the filed form. Take it with you when you go to court.

If a friend served the papers, tell him or her to give the completed form back to you. Keep a copy for your records and take the copy with you when you go to court.

You need to file the original completed *Proof of Service* form **5 days before** your trial.

When do the court forms have to be served?

- If you are serving form SC-100, *Plaintiff’s Claim*, or form SC-500, *Plaintiff’s Claim (COVID-19 Rental Debt)*, look at the trial date on page 1. Then, look at a calendar.

For *personal* service, subtract 15 days from the trial date (or 20 days if the person, business, or public entity is located outside the county). That’s the deadline for serving your small claims forms. But you can serve the forms before the deadline.

The people in (1) and (2) must go to court

Trial Date	Date	Time
1.	_____	_____

For *substituted* service, subtract 25 days from the date the server mailed a copy of the court papers served (or 30 days if the person, business, or public entity is located outside the county). That’s the deadline for serving your small claims forms. But you can serve the forms before the deadline.

If the person, business, or public entity to be served is outside California or if you are serving a different form, ask the Small Claims Advisor for more information.

- If you are serving Form SC-120, *Defendant’s Claim*, look at the trial date on page 1. Then look at a calendar.

For *personal* or *substituted* service, subtract 5 days from the trial date. That’s the deadline for serving your small claims forms if you were served at least 11 days before the trial. If you were served 10 days or less before the trial date, you must serve at least 1 day before the trial. But you can serve the forms before the deadline.

What if I can’t get the court papers served before the trial?

If you were not able to serve your claim (form SC-100, SC-120, or SC-500) before the deadline for service, talk to your Small Claims Clerk. Each county has its own rules.

If you already served your claim on some parties but not everyone you are suing, you may need to fill out and file form SC-150, *Request to Postpone Trial*, at least 10 days before the trial date (or explain why you couldn’t meet the 10-day deadline). Then give or mail a copy of this form to all other plaintiffs and defendants listed on your court papers.

The court may postpone your trial for 15 days or more.

Who do I have to serve?

If you are suing a person (or people)—not a business or public entity—serve each person you are suing. For example, if you were in a car accident and you are suing the owner and the driver of the car, you must list the names of the owner *and* the driver on your claim and serve both people.

Examples:

If the owner and driver are the same person:
Lee Smith, owner and driver

If the owner and driver are not the same person:
Lee Smith, owner and driver
Bob Smith, owner

If you are suing a business, an association, or a public entity, read form SC-104C, *How to Serve a Business*.



Need help?

Your county’s Small Claims Advisor can help for free.

Or go to “County-Specific Court Information” at:
www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp-smallclaims.htm

SC-104 Proof of Service

Use this form to serve a **person**, a **business**, or a **public entity**. To learn more about proof of service, read *What Is "Proof of Service"?*, Form SC-104B. To learn more about how to serve a business or entity, read *How to Serve a Business or Public Entity*, Form SC-104C.

To serve a **business**, you must serve **one** of the following people:

- Owner (for a sole proprietorship)
- Partner (for a partnership) or general partner (for a limited partnership)
- Any officer or general manager (corporation or association)
- Any person authorized for service by the business (corporation, association, general partnership, limited partnership)
- Any person authorized for service with the Secretary of State (corporation, association, limited liability company [LLC], limited liability partnership [LLP], limited partnership)

To serve a **public entity**, you must first file a claim with that entity, then serve **one** of the following people:

- Clerk (of a city or county)
- Chief officer or director (of a public agency)
- Any person authorized for service by the entity

1 a. If you are serving a **person**, write the person's name below:

b. If you are serving a **business** or **entity**, write the name of the business or entity, the person authorized for service, and that person's job title:

Person Authorized for Service

Job Title

2 Instructions to Server:

You must be at least 18 years old and **not be named in this case**. Follow these steps:

- Give a copy of all the documents checked in 3 to the person in 1, *or*
 - Give a copy of all the documents checked in 3 to one of the following people:
 - a. A competent adult (at least 18) living with, and at the home of the person in 1, *or*
 - b. An adult (at least 18) who seems to be in charge at the usual workplace of the person in 1, *or*
 - c. An adult (at least 18) who seems to be in charge where the person in 1 usually receives mail (but not a U.S. Post Office box), if there is no known physical address for the person in 1.
- and mail a copy of the documents left with one of the adults in a, b, or c above to the person in 1.*

THEN

- Complete and sign this form, and
- Give or mail your completed form to the person who asked you to serve these court papers, *in time for the form to be filed with the court at least 5 days before the hearing.*

3 I served the person in 1 a copy of the documents checked below:

- a. SC-100, *Plaintiff's Claim and ORDER to Go to Small Claims Court*
- b. SC-120, *Defendant's Claim and ORDER to Go to Small Claims Court*
- c. Order for examination (*This form must be personally served. Check the form that was served.*)
Note: The court can issue a civil arrest warrant if the served party does not come to court only if the order for examination was personally served by a registered process server, sheriff, marshal, or someone appointed by the court.
 - (1) SC-134, *Application and Order to Produce Statement of Assets and to Appear for Examination*
 - (2) AT-138/EJ-125, *Application and Order for Appearance and Examination*
- d. Other (specify): _____



Clerk stamps date here when form is filed.

Fill in court name and street address:

Superior Court of California, County of

Fill in case number, case name, hearing date, day, time, and department below:

Case Number:

Case Name:

Hearing Date:

Time:

Dept.:



Case name: _____

4 Fill out "a" or "b" below:

- a. **Personal Service:** I personally gave copies of the documents checked in ③ to the person in ① :
 On (date): _____ At (time): _____ a.m. p.m.
 At this address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
- b. **Substituted Service:** I personally gave copies of the documents checked in ③ (a, b, or d) to (check one):
 A competent adult (at least 18) at the **home** of, and living with the person in ① , or
 An adult who seems to be in charge where the person in ① usually **works**, or
 An adult who seems to be in charge where the person in ① usually **receives mail**, or has a private post office box (not a U.S. Post Office box), if there is no known physical address for the person in ①.

I told that adult, "Please give these court papers to (name of person in ①)."

I did this on (date): _____ At (time): _____ a.m. p.m.

At this address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Name or description of the person I gave the papers to: _____

After serving the court papers, I put copies of the documents listed in ③ in an envelope, sealed the envelope, and put first-class prepaid postage on it. I addressed the envelope to the person in ① at the address where I left the copies.

I mailed the envelope on (date): _____ from (city, state): _____

by leaving it (check one):

- a. At a U.S. Postal Service mail drop, or
 b. At an office or business mail drop where I know the mail is picked up every day and deposited with the U.S. Postal Service, or
 c. With someone else I asked to mail the documents to the person in ①, and I have attached that person's completed Form SC-104A.

5 Server's Information

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Fee for service: \$ _____

If you are a registered process server:

County of registration: _____ Registration number: _____

- 6 I declare under penalty of perjury under California state law that I am at least 18 years old and not named in this case and that the information above is true and correct.

Date: _____

Type or print server's name_____
Server signs here after serving