



COMMON LEGAL TERMS

PLEADING – is any formal document that is filed with the Court related to the case.

PARTY-refers to someone who is part of a legal action and named in the case

PETITIONER OR PLAINTIFF- is the name given to the party who begins the case.

RESPONDENT OR DEFENDANT- is the name given to the party who the legal action is brought against by the Petitioner or Plaintiff.

SUMMONS- is the name of a specific pleading that calls or “summons” the Respondent/Defendant into Court.

COMPLAINT OR PETITION –is the name given to the pleading that sets out everything that the Petitioner/Plaintiff wants the Respondent/ Defendant to do or not do.

RESPONSE OR ANSWER- is the name given to the pleading that sets out the Respondent/ Defendant’s point of view about the Petitioner /Plaintiff’s case.

NOTICE- refers to the document or the act of giving the other party in a case a heads-up of what one party is doing or going to do; for example, a Notice of a Motion for Child Support has to be noticed to the other party by service.

SERVICE- is the act of formally giving the other side your pleadings.

MOTION-means “moving” the Court in your direction via your pleadings filed and by telling the Court your position and why you should get what you are asking for in your pleadings.

DISCOVERY- is the process of discovering the documents or evidence the other side has relative to the legal issues in the case.

PROCEDURAL DEADLINES- are all deadlines by which parties must accomplish certain tasks in a case.

STIPULATION- is the legal word for an agreement between the parties.

DEFAULT- means that the party initiating the lawsuit is asking the Court to order what he or she wants because the other party has not responded by filing his or her pleadings with the Court.

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ORDER-is the decision of the Court on any particular contested issue. The Order mandates that both parties do what the Court has decided and has set out in writing in the Order.

JUDGMENT-is the Court's final and permanent decision on any particular contested issue.

The foregoing definitions are just some of the legal terms used in the law. This list is not exhaustive. If you have question about a particular term, then you should visit your local law library or consult an attorney.

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