



# Large Claim Civil Lawsuits

## What is a large claim?

The most common civil suits involve claims for money or property. Large claims cases are generally more time-consuming, formal, complicated, and expensive than small claims cases. If you do not have experience with filing lawsuits, it is often advisable to seek legal assistance. Court staff cannot give legal advice. There are no court-appointed attorneys for civil cases.

*A large claim is a civil case where damages claimed are **more than \$10,000** or a **tort claim over \$5,000**.*

If you wish to represent yourself, you must become familiar with applicable laws, civil practice and procedure, court rules, trial practice, and appropriate language for court documents.

Learn about self-representation at the Wisconsin Court System's Self-Help Center [www.wicourts.gov/services/public/selfhelp/index.htm](http://www.wicourts.gov/services/public/selfhelp/index.htm)

## How do I start a large claim?

**There are no statewide, standard forms for large claims.** You must draft your own documents.

Start a civil lawsuit by filing a **summons** and a **complaint**.

Summonses and complaints will be different in each case. The court cannot specify what information these documents should contain.

There is a filing fee of \$269.00 to file a large claim case. In Milwaukee County file the documents and pay the filing fee in Room 104 of the Milwaukee County Courthouse.

### Sample forms

- [Wisconsin Civil Litigation Form Manual](#) chapter 2 & 4

### Drafting documents

- Nolo's [Represent Yourself in Court: How to Prepare & Try a Winning Case](#) pages 62-78

### Civil Law & Procedure

- Wisconsin State Law Library Civil Law & Procedure page [wilawlibrary.gov/topics/justice/civil/index.php](http://wilawlibrary.gov/topics/justice/civil/index.php)
- [Wisconsin Civil Procedure before Trial](#)

### Summons

Informs the person being sued that a lawsuit has been filed

### Complaint

Explains why the plaintiff is suing the defendant and what the plaintiff would like the court to do



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## What happens after I file?

The defendant must be personally served with a copy of the summons and complaint. You may not serve the defendant yourself and you may not mail the papers.

Documents may be served through the sheriff or through a private process server.

After the defendant has been served, the case can go to court. There will be several court hearings and you must appear in person for each one. The first is generally a scheduling conference, where the judge sets deadlines for discovery and other things that the judge may order. Other court dates may follow, possibly including a trial.

**Milwaukee Sheriff**  
**Civil Process**  
Room 102  
Safety Building  
821 W State St  
\$75 fee

Civil trials are formal events. You may act as your own attorney, but the judge cannot assist you. You must prove your case through evidence and/or witness testimony. There are rules about what kinds of evidence and testimony you can present and how it is presented. Even though you are not an attorney, you will be expected to know and follow those rules.

## Resources available

A librarian can help you to find these books and resources.

### Wisconsin Circuit Courts

- Wisconsin Statutes (<http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes>)
- Wisconsin Administrative Code (<http://docs/legis/wisconsin.gov/code>)
- Wisconsin case law reporters and digests
- Wisconsin Supreme Court Rules (<http://www.wicourts.gov/supreme/sc-rules.jsp>)
- Local county court rules (<https://www.wisbar.org/Directories/CourtRules/Pages/Circuit-Court-Rules.aspx>)
- [Callaghan's Wisconsin Pleading & Practice with Forms](#)
- [Wisconsin Trial Practice](#)

### Federal Courts

- US Code (<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/uscode>)
- Code of Federal Regulations (<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collectionCfr.action?collectionCode-CFR>)
- US federal court reporters
- Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/rules/frcp>)