DOAR

What Makes Expert Witnesses Credible to Jurors

QUICK TIPS TO PREPARE FOR TRIAL

Jurors judge witness credibility based on how they expect a truthful and reliable person to act. When it comes to expert testimony, jurors rely on specific cues that signal an expert is knowledgeable, trustworthy, and consistent. Understanding what these cues are, and how they align with your demeanor and presentation, can significantly impact how you are perceived in court. Here are some helpful tips to prepare you for trial.

What Jurors Consider

CREDIBILITY CUES	HOW JURORS ASSESS THE EXPERT
	• Confidence and command of the subject matter • Relevant credentials and experience • Clear and natural communication • Eye contact, posture, facial expressions, and other nonverbal behaviors
CONTENT CUES	**HOW JURORS ASSESS THE EXPERT'S OPINION**
	• Evidence and facts supporting the opinion • Logic and reasoning used to reach conclusions • Reliability and clarity of the methodology • Consistency with the evidence and other testimony • Ability to explain assumptions, limitations, or conflicting information

Preparing to Testify: What Experts Should Know

1. **Prepare for stress-related changes in demeanor.** Jurors may mistake nervousness, limited eye contact, fidgeting, or hesitation for lack of certainty or competence. Maintain a consistent demeanor on direct and cross-examination.
2. **Make complex opinions easier to process.** Use plain language, explain methods clearly, and make your reasoning transparent. If jurors become confused, they may rely on snap impressions and discount the content of your testimony.
3. **Develop confident, non-defensive delivery.** Perceived confidence strongly shapes credibility. Practice responding promptly while remaining poised and relaxed under challenging cross-examination. Clarify and push back respectfully when necessary.
4. **Demonstrate expertise rather than flaunt it.** Once you appear qualified, additional credentials can have diminishing returns. Avoid jargon and balance knowledge with humility.
5. **Show ability and independence.** Jurors care less about credentials than proficiency and methodology that they can understand. Connect your methods and conclusions plainly and readily acknowledge limitations.
6. **Prepare to answer in your own words.** Memorized responses may sound scripted and contrast poorly on cross-examination. Practice until you can respond to pointed questions naturally and with composure.

Preparing for effective testimony requires more than subject-matter expertise. DOAR's trial consultants can help you strengthen how you communicate your opinions and prepare for the demands of deposition, hearing, arbitration, and trial testimony.

When witness preparation or other specialized support would be helpful to you, contact your litigation manager, who can bring the appropriate DOAR team member into the conversation and work directly with the client or law firm to determine next steps.