

PAGE 1
OF 6

RULES OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

★ 400 SERIES ★

SUMMARY CASES

A QUICK GUIDE TO THE BASICS

WHAT ARE SUMMARY CASES?

Summary cases are less serious criminal matters handled in a faster, simplified procedure. They usually involve minor offenses such as traffic violations and ordinance violations.

GOVERNING LAW:

Pennsylvania Code, Title 42,
 Chapter 4 – Procedures
 in Summary Cases
 (Pa.R.Crim.P. 400–454)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After this unit, you will be able to:

- 1 Apply the Rules of Criminal Procedure relating to summary cases.
- 2 Explain the purpose and use of citations.
- 3 Describe the role of the law enforcement officer.
- 4 Identify a defendant's obligations and pleas to citations.
- 5 Describe an MDJ's responsibilities including responses to a defendant's citation.
- 6 List the factors to consider when determining collateral.
- 7 Explain the purpose of collateral.
- 8 Describe the summary trial process and burden of proof necessary.
- 9 Explain the appeal process and timeframes.

★ KEY PLAYERS & ROLES ★

 LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER Investigates, determines if a violation occurred, and issues a citation. Files the citation with the court.	 MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT JUDGE (MDJ) Oversees the case, accepts pleas, sets fines/costs, or schedules a summary trial. Issues the decision.	 DEFENDANT Receives the citation and must respond. May plead guilty, not guilty, or no contest.	 COURT Receives filings, holds hearings/trials, and issues orders.
---	---	--	---

★ SUMMARY CASE PROCESS AT A GLANCE ★

1

VIOLATION OCCURS
 Officer observes a violation and issues a citation to the defendant.

2

FILED WITH COURT
 Law enforcement has **5 DAYS** to file the citation at the appropriate court.

3

DEFENDANT RESPONSE
 Defendant has **10 DAYS** to respond after receiving the citation.

4

COURT ACTION
 Court reviews the case after it is filed and schedules or processes accordingly.

5

RESOLUTION
 Plea, payment, trial, or other disposition by the MDJ.

6

APPEAL (IF ANY)
 If defendant appeals, the case moves to the Court of Common Pleas.

Remember: Summary cases are designed for efficiency, but due process and your rights still apply.



RULES OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

★ 400 SERIES ★

SUMMARY CASES

PAGE 2
OF 6



KEY RULES & TIMEFRAMES

#		QUESTION	ANSWER / RULE	TIMEFRAME / KEY POINT
1		How are criminal proceedings instituted in summary cases?	By citation issued by a law enforcement officer.	—
2		Time for defendant to respond after receiving a citation	Defendant must respond to the citation.	10 DAYS from the date of receipt of the citation
3		Time for law enforcement to file the citation at court	Citation must be filed with the appropriate court.	5 DAYS from the date the citation was issued
4		What should the court do after receiving a citation that was filed?	Review the citation and take appropriate action (e.g., schedule, process).	Act promptly
5		Can a guilty plea be accepted through the mail? Any exceptions?	YES, a guilty plea may be accepted through the mail.	YES , except in certain specified exceptions
6		Full amount listed on citation, but forgot to sign guilty plea?	Plea may be invalid – the court must determine the effect.	Court's Decision
7		Fail to respond or pay fines/costs (non-traffic & traffic cases)?	Bench warrant may be issued and additional costs/fines may apply.	Consequences apply immediately
8		After a not guilty plea, what should the court do?	Schedule a summary trial (set date for hearing).	Set trial date
9		Purpose of collateral – when is it used? What to consider?	To ensure appearance & payment. Consider seriousness, prior record, ties to community, etc.	Based on specific factors (see below)
10		What can the MDJ do if defendant is found guilty but unable to pay?	Authorize a payment plan or other appropriate terms.	Court's Discretion
11		How long does MDJ have to announce decision after trial?	Right away – same day.	Same Day
12		Burden of proof needed at a summary trial?	Beyond a reasonable doubt.	Higher standard



COLLATERAL: QUICK GUIDE

Purpose: To ensure the defendant appears in court and/or pays fines and costs.

Factors the Court May Consider:

- ✓ Nature and seriousness of the offense
- ✓ Defendant's prior record
- ✓ History of appearing in court
- ✓ Financial resources
- ✓ Ties to the community (residence, employment)
- ✓ Other relevant circumstances



Collateral must be reasonable and tailored to the circumstances.



APPEAL PROCESS & TIMEFRAMES

30 DAYS

Defendant has **30 DAYS** from the date of the MDJ's decision to file a notice of appeal.

10 DAYS

MDJ must file the certified record with the Court of Common Pleas within **10 DAYS** after the appeal is filed.

30 DAYS

Defendant's concise statement of errors due within **30 DAYS** after the record is filed.

30 DAYS

Commonwealth's responsive statement due within **30 DAYS** after the defendant's statement.



Appeal goes to the Court of Common Pleas, not a higher district court.



PRO TIP!



Summary cases move fast, but your rights matter!

Read your citation carefully, meet deadlines, and stay informed.





RULES OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

★ 400 SERIES ★

SUMMARY CASES

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS. KNOW THE PROCESS.



CITATIONS: THE BASICS

A citation is a written notice that you are accused of a violation of the law. It is not an arrest.



Issued by a law enforcement officer.



Explains the alleged violation, date, time, and location.

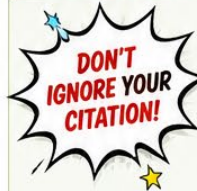


Requires your response by the date listed.



Failure to respond can result in additional fines, costs, or a bench warrant.

DEFENDANT'S RESPONSIBILITIES



Respond on Time

You have **10 DAYS** to respond after receiving your citation.



Court Appearance or Plea

Follow the instructions on your citation: appear in court or respond by mail (if eligible).



Provide Accurate Information

Keep your contact information current. Notify the court of any changes.



Pay Fines and Costs

Pay in full by the due date or as ordered by the court.



Understand the Consequences

Ignoring your citation can lead to additional penalties and a warrant.

★ COLLATERAL EXPLAINED ★

Collateral may be required to ensure your appearance in court and/or payment of fines and costs.

FACTORS THE COURT MAY CONSIDER:



NATURE & SERIOUSNESS

How serious is the alleged offense?



PRIOR RECORD

Do you have a history of violations or failing to appear?



COURT HISTORY

Have you appeared in court as ordered in the past?



FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Do you have the ability to pay fines and costs?



TIES TO THE COMMUNITY

Do you live, work, or have family in the community?



OTHER RELEVANT CIRCUMSTANCES

Any other factors that may affect the court's decision.



Collateral must be reasonable and tailored to the circumstances of the case.

SUMMARY TRIAL PROCESS (DETAILS)

1 VIOLATION OCCURS



Officer observes a violation and issues a citation.

2 FILED WITH COURT



Law enforcement files the citation with the appropriate court within **5 DAYS**.

3 DEFENDANT RESPONSE



Defendant has **10 DAYS** to respond after receiving the citation.

4 COURT ACTION



Court reviews the case after it is filed and schedules or processes accordingly.

5 RESOLUTION



Plea, payment, trial, or other disposition by the MDJ.

6 APPEAL (IF ANY)



If defendant appeals, the case moves to the Court of Common Pleas.

REMEMBER!



Summary cases are designed for efficiency, but due process and your rights still apply. Be informed. Be prepared. Be heard.

JUSTICE MATTERS!



RULES OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

★ 400 SERIES ★

SUMMARY CASES

THE COURT'S ROLE & DECISIONS



WHAT THE COURT DOES



REVIEWS THE CASE

Examines the citation, any evidence, and your response or plea.



HOLDS HEARINGS OR TRIALS

Conducts hearings or summary trials to resolve the case.



MAKES DECISIONS

Determines guilt or innocence, sets fines/costs, or dismisses the case.



ISSUES ORDERS

Orders may include payment plans, community service, or other conditions.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES



NOT GUILTY

Case is dismissed. No fines or penalties.



GUILTY – FINES & COSTS

Court sets fines and orders payment of costs.



PAYMENT PLAN

Court may allow payments over time based on your circumstances.



OTHER CONDITIONS

May include community service or other court-imposed requirements.



FAIL TO COMPLY

Additional penalties, warrants, or license suspension may apply.

WARNING SIGNS!

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU!



IGNORING YOUR CITATION

Can lead to additional fines, costs, and a bench warrant.



FAILURE TO PAY FINES/COSTS

May result in license suspension, collections, or wage garnishment.



MISSING YOUR COURT DATE

The court may issue a bench warrant for your arrest.



IMPACT ON YOUR RECORD

Unresolved cases can affect your driving record and future opportunities.



APPEAL PROCESS: STEP BY STEP

1



DECISION RECEIVED

MDJ issues decision after summary trial.

2



FILE NOTICE OF APPEAL

Defendant has **30 DAYS** from the date of the MDJ's decision to file a notice of appeal.

3



RECORD SENT

MDJ must file the certified record with the Court of Common Pleas within **10 DAYS** after the appeal is filed.

4



DEFENDANT'S STATEMENT

Defendant's concise statement of errors due within **30 DAYS** after the record is filed.

5



COMMONWEALTH'S RESPONSE

Commonwealth's responsive statement due within **30 DAYS** after the defendant's statement.



Appeal goes to the Court of Common Pleas, not a higher district court.



BURDEN OF PROOF AT A SUMMARY TRIAL

The Commonwealth (prosecution) must prove the defendant's guilt **BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT**.



If the court has a reasonable doubt about your guilt, it must find you **NOT GUILTY**.



Better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent suffer.

— William Blackstone



BE SMART!



**KNOW THE RULES. FOLLOW THE PROCESS.
PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS.**

BE PREPARED!

RULES OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

★ 400 SERIES ★

SUMMARY CASES

PENALTIES & PAYMENTS: WHAT TO EXPECT

COMMON PENALTIES IN SUMMARY CASES



FINES

Most common penalty.
Must be paid by the due date or as ordered.



PAYMENT PLANS

Court may allow payments over time
based on your circumstances.



COSTS

Court costs and surcharges may be
added to fines.



COMMUNITY SERVICE

Court may order a certain number
of community service hours.



LICENSE SUSPENSION

Failure to pay or appear may lead to
driver's license suspension.



OTHER CONDITIONS

Court may impose conditions such as
classes, treatment, or restrictions.

IF YOU CAN'T PAY

DON'T IGNORE IT!

There are options. Talk to the court.



Tell the court about your
financial situation.
Honesty can help the court
work with you.



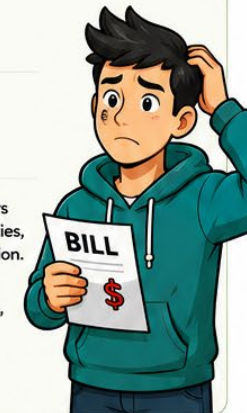
Ask about payment plans,
waivers, or alternative
arrangements.



Ignoring fines or court orders
can lead to additional penalties,
warrants, or license suspension.



The court wants compliance,
not more punishment.
Communicate!



AFTER A NOT GUILTY PLEA: WHAT HAPPENS?



1 TRIAL SET

The court will set
a date for your
summary trial.



2 TRIAL DAY

Be prepared to
present your side
of the case.



3 EVIDENCE & TESTIMONY

Both sides may present
evidence and call
witnesses.



4 DECISION

The MDJ will decide:
guilty or
not guilty.



5 OUTCOME

If not guilty, the case
is dismissed and no
penalties apply.



FAILURE TO COMPLY: CONSEQUENCES

Not following court orders can lead to serious consequences:



BENCH WARRANT

The court may issue a warrant for your arrest.



ADDITIONAL FINES & COSTS

More money, more problems.



LICENSE SUSPENSION

Your driving privileges may be suspended.



COLLECTION ACTIONS

Fines and costs may be sent to collections.



CRIMINAL CHARGES

Willful failure to comply can lead to new charges.



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ Read your citation carefully.
- ✓ Respond on time.
- ✓ Appear in court or follow instructions.
- ✓ Be honest about your situation.
- ✓ Keep records of payments and court dates.
- ✓ Ask questions if you're unsure.
- ✓ Take care of the case so it doesn't take care of you!



**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS. FOLLOW THE PROCESS.
BE INFORMED. BE PREPARED. BE HEARD.**





RULES OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

★ 400 SERIES ★

SUMMARY CASES

QUICK REFERENCE & FINAL TAKEAWAYS



SUMMARY CASES AT A GLANCE

Summary cases handle less serious offenses in a faster, simplified way—but your rights still matter every step.

- ✓ You have the right to notice.
- ✓ You have the right to respond.
- ✓ You have the right to a fair hearing.
- ✓ You have the right to appeal.
- ✓ You have the responsibility to follow the rules and deadlines.



KEY DEADLINES SUMMARY



DEFENDANT RESPONSE

Respond within **10 DAYS** of receiving the citation.

10 DAYS

FILED WITH COURT

Law enforcement must file the citation within **5 DAYS**.

5 DAYS

RECORD AFTER APPEAL

MDJ must file the certified record within **10 DAYS** of the appeal.

10 DAYS

STATEMENTS DUE

Statements of errors & responsive statements are due within **30 DAYS**.

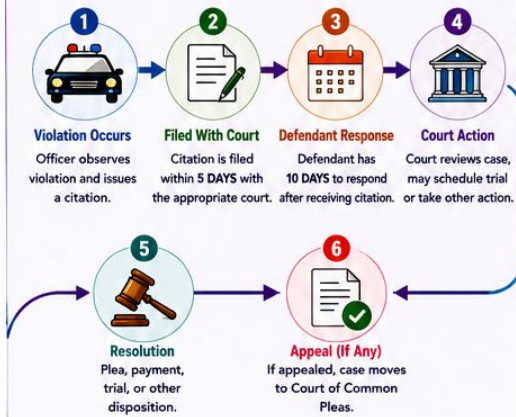
30 DAYS

NOTICE OF APPEAL

File within **30 DAYS** of the MDJ's decision.

30 DAYS

THE JOURNEY OF A SUMMARY CASE



BURDEN OF PROOF & STANDARDS

In a summary trial, the burden of proof is on the Commonwealth.



If the Commonwealth cannot meet this standard, you must be found **NOT GUILTY**.

QUICK CHECKLIST

- ✓ Read your citation carefully.
- ✓ Note all deadlines.
- ✓ Respond or appear on time.
- ✓ Keep copies of everything.
- ✓ Understand your options (plea, trial, payment plan).
- ✓ Ask questions if you're unsure.
- ✓ Follow through on court orders or agreements.
- ✓ If you appeal, file on time and follow the process.

★ BE PROACTIVE. BE PREPARED. BE PROTECTED.

APPEAL PROCESS OVERVIEW

- 1 DECISION RECEIVED**
MDJ issues decision after summary trial.
- 2 FILE NOTICE OF APPEAL**
File within **30 DAYS** with the MDJ.
- 3 RECORD FILED**
MDJ files certified record with Court of Common Pleas within **10 DAYS**.
- 4 STATEMENTS OF ERRORS**
Defendant files within **30 DAYS**; Commonwealth responds within **30 DAYS**.
- 5 COURT OF COMMON PLEAS REVIEW**
Appeal is heard in the Court of Common Pleas (not a higher district court).



YOU'VE GOT THE KNOWLEDGE. NOW USE IT!

★ **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS. FOLLOW THE PROCESS. BE INFORMED. BE PREPARED. BE HEARD.**



For complete rules and details, refer to:

→ Pennsylvania Code, Title 42, Chapter 4 – Procedures in Summary Cases (Pa.R.Crim.P. 400–454)