# **Resolve Consumer Problems in Small Claims Court**[l](http://www.usa.gov/gobiernousa/Temas/Consumidor/Informacion/tribunal-demandas-menores.shtml)

Small claims courts resolve disputes over small amounts of money. While the maximum amount that can be claimed differs from state to state, court procedures are generally simple, inexpensive, quick and informal. Court fees are minimal, and you often get your filing fee back if you win your case. Typically, you will not need a lawyer-some states do not permit them. If you live in a state that allows lawyers and the party you are suing brings one, don't be intimidated. Most judges make allowances for consumers who appear without lawyers. Even though the court is informal, the judge's decision must be followed.

If you file a case and win, the losing party should give you what the court says you are owed without further action on your part. But some losers refuse to follow the court's decision. When this happens, you can go back to court and ask for the order to be enforced. Depending on local laws, law enforcement officials might sell a person's property or take money from a bank account or business cash register. If the person who owes the money receives a salary, the court might order an employer to garnish (deduct money from) each paycheck to pay you.

Check your local telephone book under the municipal, county or state government headings for small claims court offices. Ask the clerk how to use the small claims court. Before taking your own case to court, observe a small claims court session and ask the court if it has information that will help you prepare your presentation to the judge.