



The National Self-Represented Litigants Project

# The McKenzie Friend

Bringing a support person with you to court



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Many thanks to the judges who gave their time for interviews and shared their valuable thoughts and opinions. Thanks also to the friendly professionals who offered useful and helpful feedback on early drafts.

Special thanks to Dr. Julie Macfarlane, who had the original idea for this guide, and whose guidance, knowledge, unparalleled expertise, and positive support made it happen. Julie's commitment to access to justice is an inspiration, and this guide exists because of it.

Judith M. DaSilva, B.A. B.H.Sc.O.T. M.A.

## Praise for the first edition of *The McKenzie Friend*

“ This is a helpful effort to assist self-represented litigants to recognize issues arising from a request to allow a support person to sit with them in the courtroom, to anticipate concerns that an opposing litigant, the litigant's counsel, or the judge, may have in connection with the request, and to prepare the litigant to address those concerns. ”

**Justice David Price** of the Ontario Superior Court, *in his personal capacity*

“ Thoughtful advice for SRLs on help in court. Court is stressful for everyone, and especially for SRLs. Judith DaSilva's approach makes sense. ”

**Malcolm Mercer**, Bencher, Law Society of Upper Canada

“ With their clear, straight-forward guide to choosing and presenting a courtroom companion, Judith DaSilva and Julie Macfarlane will help thousands of people to assess whether they need a McKenzie friend, how to choose a McKenzie friend, and how to explain their needs to judges. Equal service to self-represented litigants is the next frontier in making Canada's justice system fair to all. ”

**David Merner**, Executive Director, Dispute Resolution Office, British Columbia Ministry of Justice


# What is a McKenzie Friend?



A “McKenzie Friend” is a support person who sits with a self-represented litigant (SRL) at the front of the court or hearing room, when appearing before a judge or a master.

A McKenzie Friend cannot address the court, but they can:

- organize and hand an SRL their documents as needed,
- take notes for review after the hearing, and (above all)
- help an SRL to stay calm and centred.

 The name “McKenzie Friend” came from a case in England in 1970, called *McKenzie v McKenzie*. You can read more about that landmark case in Robert Spon-Smith’s article “McKenzie Friends”. <http://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed1568>

The case that established the concept of the McKenzie Friend gives a self-represented person the right to ask a judge to allow them to bring a support person into the courtroom with them. **The judge has ultimate discretion to agree to or to refuse this request** – in other words, the judge has the final say.

Although “McKenzie Friend” is a term used regularly since the 1970s in England and Australia, in Canada this is a relatively new concept.

Despite being new to Canada, the idea of having a friend in court with you is not new to Canadian judges. In fact, most judges have experience with an SRL, alone in their task, requesting that someone sit beside them for support.

## About this primer

To create the first edition of this primer, we interviewed nine Canadian judges to gather their opinions and thoughts on:

How they would feel about being asked for permission for a McKenzie Friend

What they would expect from a McKenzie Friend in the courtroom

Why they would refuse a request for a McKenzie Friend

Their thoughts generally about the role of a McKenzie Friend in a courtroom

Their comments have been integrated throughout this primer to give some additional context.

Because the concept of the McKenzie Friend is relatively new to Canada there are, to date, just a few specific guidelines for when and how judges may allow their use (eg. BC Provincial Court).

**This means that who you bring, and how you make your request, is very important.**

We’ve organized this primer into three parts:

**Part 1:** Deciding if you want a McKenzie Friend

**Part 2:** Choosing a McKenzie Friend

**Part 3:** Requesting permission for a McKenzie Friend



We’ve also provided you with a **McKenzie Friend Worksheet** (to help you decide if you need a McKenzie Friend, define their role, and then choose the right person for the job), and **Presentation Template** (to help you prepare and present an argument to the judge for the acceptance of your McKenzie Friend). You can find both documents on our page



<https://representingyourselfcanada.com/our-srl-resources/>.



After you’ve read this guide, you may also want to refer to the McKenzie Friend companion primer: **The McKenzie Friend: Canadian cases and further research**.

We hope that this primer is helpful to you. If you need information that is not included in this primer, we would like to hear from you. You can reach us at [representingyourself@gmail.com](mailto:representingyourself@gmail.com).



# Part 1: Deciding if you want a McKenzie Friend

This section will help you decide if you would like a McKenzie Friend to sit with you, and if so, how they might be able to help.

## What can a McKenzie Friend do for you?

In the courtroom, a court companion or McKenzie Friend can:

- **Help organize** your legal documents,
- **Hand you documents** when you need them in the course of your presentation to the court,
- **Take notes** to review with you later,
- **Observe** the courtroom discussion,
- **Occasionally communicate** with you in the courtroom through notes or whispering, as long as you don't interfere with or take attention away from the court process (even if you're being courteous, some judges don't like this), and
- **Offer emotional and moral support.**

Your McKenzie Friend doesn't have to do all of these things. They may do only one task, or a combination of the above.

Later on, we'll help you determine the specific areas you want support in, so you can pick the best "fit" for the job. You'll also want to clearly explain what you need from your McKenzie Friend before you go into the courtroom with them.

## What can a McKenzie Friend not do?

In addition to what a McKenzie Friend can do for you, you should also be clear about what they *cannot* do:

### No legal advice

A McKenzie friend can't help you with legal advice. As an SRL, you're responsible for researching and putting forward your own legal arguments in the court or hearing room.

### No addressing the court, unless...

In exceptional circumstances a judge may allow a McKenzie Friend to address the court. However, you cannot count on a judge to allow this and we advise you *not* to expect an exception. When judges do make exceptions, they'd be granted on a case-by-case basis. Reasons might include:

- Cultural barriers
- Language comprehension
- Mental health issues

But again, this decision is completely at the discretion of the judge. And such exceptions are rare.

Once you've decided that you want a McKenzie Friend, your next task is to clearly define their role. Once you've done that, you will want to choose the person with the best combination of skills.

## Objectively assessing your courtroom skills

First, you'll need to objectively assess your courtroom skills. In areas where you're not as strong, this may be where a McKenzie Friend can help.

In a courtroom, you need to use a number of skills at once to be effective. While *presenting* information, you need to be able to SPEAK clearly

While *processing* new information coming in, you'll also need to **LISTEN, THINK, and RESPOND**. You also need to keep track of documents, and remain calm and clear-headed.

## Presenting and processing

If you had a lawyer, speaking and responding in the courtroom would be their job. But as an SRL, it's up to you. These "presenting and processing" tasks are often the hardest to do under stress. They can be even more challenging when you're also trying to process what's happening.

After you **SPEAK**, you need to **LISTEN** to what is being said to you and around you, **THINK** about it, and then figure out the best way to **RESPOND**.

Take time to think about what you have heard before you **RESPOND**. Take time to think about how you **RESPOND**.

**RESPONDING** may involve finding items to refer to from your documents and notes, and then **SPEAKING** in response.

As an SRL, **SPEAKING, LISTENING, THINKING** and **RESPONDING** in court are ultimately your responsibility. This is a tall order, and you should be realistic about what you are able to do under stressful conditions in the courtroom.

## Confirming your strengths

Ask yourself the following questions to confirm your strengths, and where a McKenzie Friend might fit in.

### Communicating effectively

How good are you at speaking? How about listening, thinking, processing, and responding in the moment? Would having some assistance help you to manage stress? Or do you prefer to control all aspects of these tasks yourself?

### Handling documents

How important is it for you to handle your own documents in the hearing? Would it be helpful to have someone who can organize and pass you documents while you listen to what's being said? Or do you prefer to remain in charge of documents yourself?

### Managing stress

Do you expect that you'll be calm under this type of pressure? If you had someone sitting beside you, even quietly, would that help you feel calmer? Or would that just distract you?

## Deciding where you want help

If you've reflected on the above questions and decided that yes, you want a McKenzie Friend, it's now important to be clear on the role you want them to play.

Here are some more questions that will help you narrow down the role of your McKenzie Friend, and some tasks they could do for you:

- Do you want or need someone to take notes to review with you later?
- Do you want someone to observe the courtroom discussion?
- Do you need someone who can hand you documents when you need them in the course of your presentation to the court?
- Do you need someone who can help organize your legal documents?
- Do you want someone to give you feedback on how they thought you sounded or how things went in court?
- Do you need someone who is good at most or all of these tasks? Or do you just need someone who helps you feel calm, so you can handle all or most of these tasks yourself?

## Your support people outside the courtroom

Depending upon how complex your case is, choosing a McKenzie Friend might be about more than the hours you will spend *inside* the courtroom.



If you have a case that is ongoing and more complex, you may already have a friend or even a community justice worker (e.g. from a shelter, safe space organization, advocacy, or support group) giving you support outside the courtroom with tasks such as

- Case preparation
- Writing or editing letters
- Completing legal forms
- Giving feedback after your hearing, especially if your case is continuing

Or perhaps you have people who have listened to you, acted as a **sounding board**, or **given input** on how to problem-solve and strategize about your next steps.

It may be a good idea to choose to use one of these people as your McKenzie Friend in court, since they are already familiar with your case. But you'll need to evaluate if they're the *best* choice. For example, they may or may not feel comfortable extending their role to coming with you to court.



## Part 2: Choosing a McKenzie Friend

**This section will help you choose the best person to be your McKenzie Friend.**

Your choice of McKenzie Friend is important for you, and may influence the judge's decision on whether or not to allow it.

Your McKenzie Friend should have a mix of the **personality characteristics** and **skills** that will help them fulfill the role you've defined. You might consider a friend, a family member, or a professional who you know and trust.

Here are some of the issues to think about when considering who to choose as your McKenzie Friend.

### Friends and family as McKenzie Friends

A friend or family member may be a good choice as a McKenzie Friend. However, there are **special considerations** to keep in mind. Choosing a family member to be your McKenzie Friend can be simple or complicated, depending on your unique family dynamics.

#### Children

Choosing your child as a McKenzie Friend may work well, or it may not.

One of the judges we interviewed suggested that using a child of the marriage as a McKenzie Friend in a divorce case is not a good idea. Especially if there's a risk that the child will become aligned with one or the other parent, which can escalate the dispute.

Another judge spoke about a case where an adult son consistently helped calm down his angry father, while encouraging him to listen to his mother. In this case, both parents appreciated their son's presence. In this judge's opinion, this McKenzie Friend was very helpful.

If you're considering your child as a McKenzie Friend, remember that doing so may raise concerns. You'll need to decide if bringing your child with you is a good idea in your situation.

#### Grandparents

Like a child, a grandparent in a divorce dispute may or may not be a good choice as a McKenzie Friend.

One of the judges we interviewed said they would always advise the self-represented litigant against having a grandparent as a courtroom companion.



However, depending on your family dynamic, the judge may determine that a grandparent's presence is beneficial. It's possible that a judge may issue a warning, and then allow it.

As we suggested in the section on children, you'll need to objectively assess your own family situation if you're considering a grandparent as a McKenzie Friend.

## If your friend or family member is a lawyer or paralegal

Most judges we interviewed agreed that a McKenzie Friend should never be a lawyer or paralegal.

Although technically the profession of your McKenzie Friend should not matter, the judges we interviewed (in 2015/16, for the first edition of this primer) had some reluctance to allow a legal professional to act as a support person. Judges told us that their reluctance is due to the *temptation* for your friend to give you legal advice.

In addition, many judges are still adjusting to the increase in self-represented litigants in their courtroom, let alone the presence of McKenzie Friends. For this reason, it might be safer to ask for support that is not potentially contentious.

**Generally, we suggest that you do your best to find a McKenzie Friend who is not a lawyer or paralegal.**

However, if you are set on presenting a McKenzie Friend who happens to be legally trained, you should be prepared to defend your choice. And realize that your request is at greater risk of being denied.

### Defending your choice to use a legal professional

Here are some things you can say if you're requesting a McKenzie Friend who is also a legal professional. However there's no guarantee that these arguments will persuade a judge to grant you permission.

- Be clear about how critical it is for you to have a support person in order for you to state your case.
- Explain to the judge that you feel you would be more steady and organized, and you feel the court process will go more smoothly if your McKenzie Friend could sit with you at the front table.
- Provide details about your personal relationship with your lawyer or paralegal friend, and how they are your best choice. If your relationship began before they became a lawyer or paralegal, you should state this.
- State clearly that the lawyer or paralegal you are requesting as your McKenzie Friend is not retained to represent you. **You need to really emphasize this point.**
- If your friend or family member practices a different area of law than the case at hand, it's important to stress this fact and make it clear that they are not giving you legal advice.
- Be clear about how their profession is incidental to your choice of them as your moral and organizational support.

## Other Potential McKenzie Friends

Friends and family may naturally be the first people you consider when deciding on your McKenzie Friend. But they may or may not be the right choice for you for a number of reasons.

- Friends and family may know your case, but may also be anxious in a courtroom
- Their relationship with the other party may cause problems
- Someone may be great at helping you stay calm, but there may be issues or facts that surface in court that you don't feel comfortable with them knowing
- However well-meaning, supportive, and loving your friend or family member may be, you may wonder if they will keep what happens in the courtroom private
- You may also simply not want to burden a friend or family member with the degree of responsibility and involvement that being your McKenzie Friend might require





If you need support, but you don't have a friend or family member who fits the bill, you might want to ask a professional who you know and trust, such as:

- A member of the clergy or a religious leader in your community
- A therapist or counselor
- A community justice worker (e.g. from a shelter, safe space organization, advocacy, or support group)
- A community volunteer

When evaluating professionals as your McKenzie Friend, use the same criteria we cover in this primer. Find the person who has the right mix of skills to meet the role you've defined for them. Remember there is no problem with a professional who is not a lawyer or a paralegal helping you as your McKenzie Friend, if they are not charging you a fee.

## Fee-charging McKenzie Friends

In England, SRLs may be able to hire McKenzie Friends for a fee. At this time, fee-charging McKenzie Friends are not permitted in Canada.



Though fee-charging McKenzie Friends in the UK are not regulated professionals, they have formed a professional association called the Society of Professional McKenzie Friends. <http://www.mckenziefriends.directory>

On this site, you can also read a McKenzie Friend Code of Conduct. Although it does not apply in Canada, it might be helpful for you to review the principles in this Code with your McKenzie Friend.

Despite making progress in the U.K., the legal landscape around McKenzie Friends *continues to change*. The idea of fee-charging McKenzie Friends in Canada raises familiar arguments about the regulation of fee-charging legal services, and is likely to cause controversy.

## Personal characteristics to look for in your McKenzie Friend

When evaluating who might act as your McKenzie Friend, you'll want to ask yourself a number of questions.

### How much do you trust them?

Do you trust this person with your personal and financial information, and any issues or topics that might be discussed in court?

Will this person support you no matter what the other side says about you? If there's potentially new, surprising, or shocking information disclosed, will this affect your relationship with your McKenzie Friend?

Remember, facts may be stated in court by the other side that your McKenzie Friend has not heard or does not know. If you think they could be easily shocked or swayed, you may want to consider someone else.

In our interviews, one judge spoke about a case in which a friendship was unfortunately damaged because of this. You need your McKenzie Friend to be someone who will remain calm and supportive – and on your side.

### Do they have a personal agenda?

Will the person you bring as your McKenzie Friend be there to support you – without having an agenda that might create conflict or distract from your case?

In our interviews, judges told us that they do not respond well to other people in the courtroom who are there to further their own *political agendas*, such as being members of advocacy groups for fathers or mothers.

It's also important to consider if your support person has a *personal agenda*. For example, if they feel angry or resentful about how their *own* divorce case turned out which may create conflict with you or the other party.

### What's their relationship to the other side?

Finally, what is this person's relationship with the other side? Consider both their relationship in the past, and the state of their relationship today.

Will their relationship history with the other side affect how supportive they can be for you? Is there any conflict brewing between them and the other side? Might this tension distract them from giving their complete attention to your case and the judge?



# Part 3: Requesting permission for a McKenzie Friend

This section will help you prepare and present an argument to the judge to persuade them to accept your McKenzie Friend.

On your court or hearing date, you'll arrive in person with your McKenzie Friend. Before they can sit beside you and support you, you'll need to ask the judge to allow it.

Remember, a McKenzie Friend is fairly new in the Canadian court system, so not all judges in Canada will have the same level of understanding or openness to this idea.

## Recognizing the perspectives of all parties

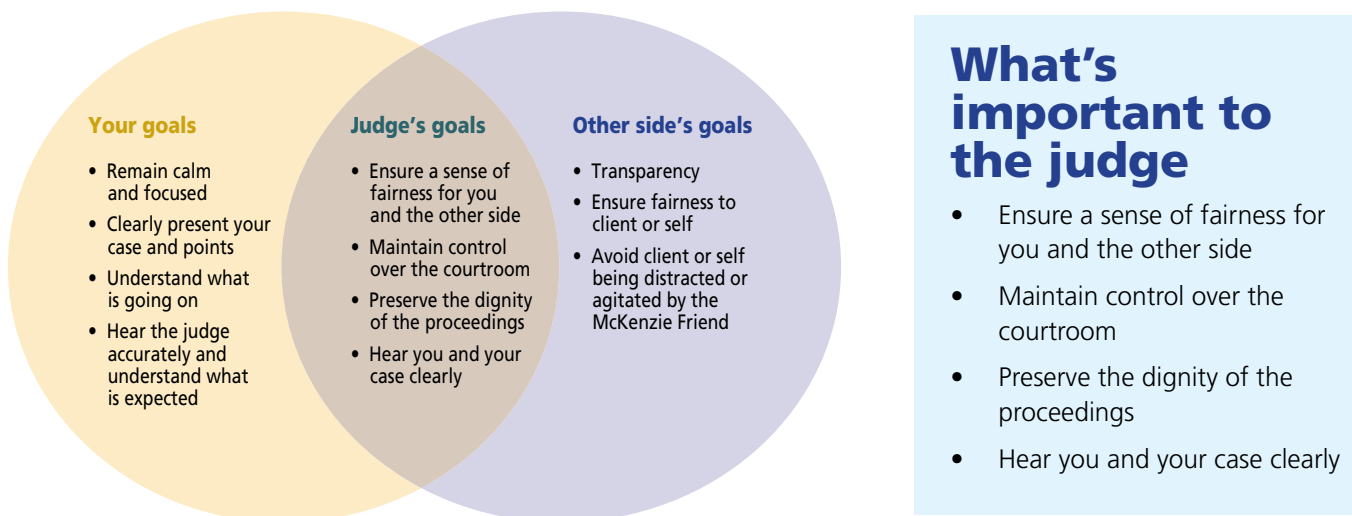
When asking a judge for permission to have a McKenzie Friend with you in the courtroom, recognize that there are three perspectives, each with their own goals, needs, and expectations:

- Your goals
- The judge's goals
- The other side's goals

When the judge is considering your request for a McKenzie Friend, it's their job to balance these three perspectives.



**Warning! Judges have a wide range of opinion and practice on the use of support people. The best thing you can do is be prepared.**



Every judge we interviewed said that they understand that their job is to facilitate an SRL in presenting their case, while appearing fair and impartial to both sides.

Of course, there are courtroom rules to be followed and each judge will do this a bit differently. But generally, judges need to show that they've given you every opportunity to speak, hear, and respond.

Every judge we interviewed also said that if an SRL thinks that having a friend or family member sitting beside them will help them, they would always consider allowing it. And they are most likely to give permission when:

- Your friend follows court rules
- Your friend is not disruptive
- The other side doesn't object

To quote a judge:

**"The courtroom is supposed to be a fair, controlled, special place for arguing disputes. Rules apply. So, any element that comes into the courtroom must assist in preserving that atmosphere in the court."**



## How you ask is important

Judges understand that their job is to be in charge of the courtroom. And it's very important for you to remember that you do not have a guaranteed right to have a McKenzie Friend sit beside you.

How you ask is important. As one judge stated:

“...my approach is very different if [an SRL] asks or if they *presume* [they can have a friend]. [OUR ITALICS] Sometimes they presume. I am more generous if they ask.”

Ultimately, a judge wants you to be able to speak clearly, have your complete attention on them and the proceedings, be able to respond to questions, and stay focused. With this in mind, you need to be clear, respectful, and reasonable in making your request. You should also consider the perspective of the other side.

## The terminology you use is (also!) important

As we mentioned, few Canadian judges are familiar with the term “McKenzie Friend” and if you *only* use that term, it may confuse or surprise the judge.

Having said that, all of the judges we interviewed said they'd experienced an SRL asking for someone to “sit beside them in the courtroom”. When requesting permission, you may want to use this phrase, or “bringing a friend to court” instead of the legal expression “McKenzie Friend”.

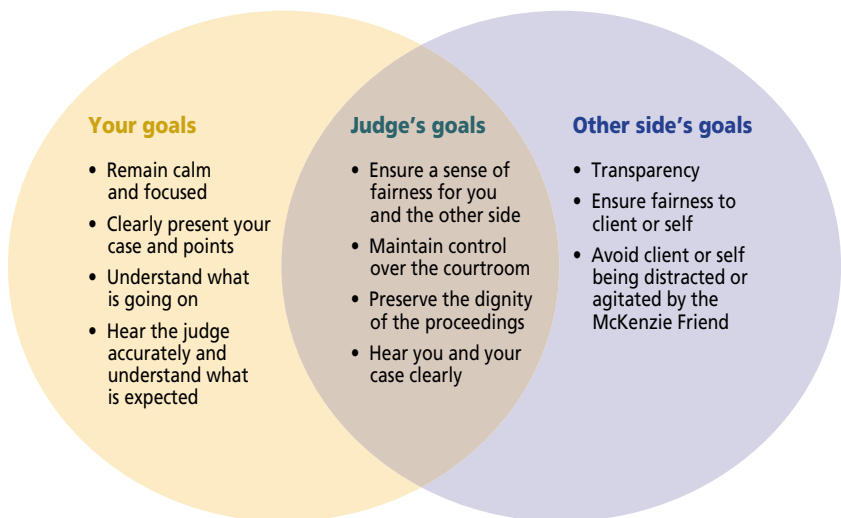
## When might a judge not allow a McKenzie Friend?

From the interviews we conducted, we learned that a judge may deny your request for a McKenzie Friend or a support person if the judge thinks that they are:

- An agent of a special interest group, and are there in that capacity
- A legal agent who will give legal advice, presenting themselves as a friend
- Known to the court to have a history of disruptive behavior in the courtroom
- Visibly aggressive
- A minor
- A witness in your proceeding

The judge may also deny your request if your hearing is a private or confidential proceeding (for example, some settlement meetings do not permit members of the public to attend).

A final reason why a judge may deny a request for a McKenzie Friend or support person is the context or history of your case. For example, if your proposed McKenzie Friend has a history of conflict with the other side, the judge may feel that allowing this McKenzie Friend would be unfair or inappropriate (see Part 2, Choosing a McKenzie Friend).



### What's important to the other side

- Transparency
- Fairness (to their client or, if they are also an SRL, to themselves)
- Avoiding distraction or agitation by the McKenzie Friend



We asked the judges in our interviews how important the other side's perspective was to making their decision to allow a McKenzie Friend.

When you present your support person, expect that some judges will ask the other side if they have any objections. Most of the judges we interviewed said that if the other side does have objections, they would not allow your McKenzie Friend.

### Do your best to anticipate objections

The moment a person moves from the public gallery to the front table, that person becomes a part of the court process. Anyone sitting beside you is no longer simply a spectator. For this reason, transparency is very important to the other side.

Your best bet is to choose your McKenzie Friend *carefully*. Then try to anticipate what the other side might say and be prepared to respond.

To be extra careful, we suggest that you **notify the other side** that you intend to ask for a support person to sit beside you, in advance of your court or hearing date. Notifying the other side in advance shows them and the judge respect. It has the additional advantage of demonstrating that you understand procedure.

### If the other side objects to your support person

However rare, it is possible that the other side may object to your support person. Their objection may be justified, or it may be an unfair "tactic". In other words, they may object because they believe that whatever helps you is bad for them.

If you think the other side may object for this reason, be prepared to respond. State why you think the other side is using their objection as a tactic, and address the details of their objection.

In this type of challenging situation, you may feel tempted not to notify the other side that you want to bring a support person to court because you do not want to give them an opportunity to formulate objections.

**Resist the urge to use this element of surprise.** Most judges will appreciate full disclosure. You can tell the judge that while you anticipated the other side would object, you still felt it was important to be transparent in giving them advance notification of your wish to bring a McKenzie Friend.

### If the other side requests a support person

If the other side is also an SRL, they may appreciate you notifying them of your intention to bring a McKenzie Friend. They may also decide to request their own support person. Your cooperation may be seen by the judge as giving the other side an opportunity for fairness. It can be a way of establishing your credibility and good faith with the judge.

### Reasons a judge might dismiss a McKenzie Friend

Once a judge has allowed a McKenzie Friend, they will only dismiss them at a later time if they are considered to be "disruptive" to the proceedings.

Being disruptive isn't only speaking in court (which McKenzie Friends are not permitted to do: see Part 1 above). Body language and behaviour can also be seen as disruptive: for example, eye rolling, sighing, huffing, snickering, laughing out loud, or any other behaviour or sound that the judge interprets as disrespectful.

Again, the nature of dismissal will depend on the situation and the judge. If a judge dismisses a McKenzie Friend, it may be to the public seating. Or the judge might ask them to leave the courtroom altogether. Some judges may give one warning and then dismiss. Others may give a few reprimands or warnings before they dismiss a McKenzie Friend.




Finally, be aware that some "court access restriction orders" have banned specific people from appearing as a McKenzie Friend (Federal Court and Alberta Court of Queen's Bench). Please see our McKenzie Friend Companion Primer, ***The McKenzie Friend: Canadian cases and additional research*** for a list of these cases.



## The bottom line

The use of McKenzie Friends is relatively new in Canada. But we can assume that this practice will develop rapidly given the rising numbers of self-represented litigants across the country.

Also, because we refer to countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia for ideas on justice system reform (and these countries are using McKenzie Friends), the growth is likely to continue.

 Some courts are beginning to introduce guidelines on the use of McKenzie Friends (for example, [Provincial Court of British Columbia Support Person Guidelines](#)).



Don't forget to download our **McKenzie Friend Worksheet** (to help you decide if you need a McKenzie Friend, define their role, and then choose the right person for the job), and **Presentation Template** (to help you prepare and present an argument to the judge for the acceptance of your McKenzie Friend). You can find both documents on our page <https://representingyourselfcanada.com/our-srl-resources/>.



For further research, see our primer ***The McKenzie Friend: Canadian cases and additional research.***

Each Canadian judge we interviewed, regardless of their opinions, expressed a consistent theme:

**If a McKenzie Friend helps keep an SRL focused on the judge and the process, whatever their background or combination of skills, this person can be beneficial to have in their courtroom.**



# A list of the primers we offer

## Here are the primers we currently offer

 They're free for you to download here: <https://representingyourselfcanada.com/our-srl-resources/>

### Step 1: Getting ready and starting the legal process





-  **So you're representing yourself:** A primer to help you get ready to represent yourself in family or civil court
-  **A guide for SRLs with disabilities:** Understanding your rights and requesting the assistance you need
-  **A Courtroom Companion (McKenzie Friend)**
-  **The McKenzie Friend:** Bringing a support person with you to court
-  **Considering Mindfulness:** How you can use Mindfulness to increase your focus and relieve the stress of representing yourself

### Step 2: Doing your research and preparing your arguments

#### Doing Your Research

-  **Part 1:** Understanding precedent and navigating the CanLII legal database (available in English and French)
-  **Part 2:** Assessing CanLII case reports, and using them to build your legal argument
-  **Reference Guide:** Legal definitions, court abbreviations and Canada's court systems at-a glance
-  **Critical Judicial Decisions for Self-Represented Litigants:** Using important case law that establishes rights for self-represented litigants and how the justice system should protect you from bias
-  **Settlement Smarts** Tips on effectively using negotiation, mediation and Judge-led settlement processes
-  **What you need to know about affidavits**

### Step 3: Presenting your case in court

-  **Coping with the courtroom:** A primer to help you navigate the written (and unwritten rules) of the courtroom
-  **How to order a court transcript**
-  **Working with opposing counsel:** Building constructive working relationships between self-represented litigants and opposing counsel
-  **Tips from the bench:** Advice for SRLs, and the judges who work with them

To keep up with what's happening at the National Self-Represented Litigants Project (NSRLP), visit **RepresentingYourselfCanada.com**.

If you have comments for us, or suggestions for ways to improve our primers, let us know at [representingyourself@gmail.com](mailto:representingyourself@gmail.com).