Opening Statement Worksheet

A fill-in outline for your own opening statement at a custody hearing: five parts in order, a 30-second version, and a line for the exhibit or witness behind each fact. Every line is a blank or a [placeholder]; it does not say what to ask for or what to say.

Your judge and your court's rules come first. Many judges skip opening statements at short hearings or ask for a brief summary instead, and local rules and time limits vary. An opening statement previews evidence; it is not evidence or testimony. Check your court's self-help center, and consult a licensed attorney where you live if you can.

How to use it

- Fill in the blanks with your own facts. Cross out any part that does not apply.
- Next to each fact, write the exhibit number or the witness. Use only the rows you choose to fill.
- Use dates and actions. Use the same names for people and places all the way through.
- Read it out loud with a timer, and keep the 30-second version ready.
- Bring this page as notes if your court allows notes.

Hearing details

Court and case number: [_____] Hearing date: [_____] Hearing type: [_____]

Time the judge allows for openings, if you know it: _____ minutes

1. Introduce yourself (one sentence)

My name: [your full name] My relationship to the child: [_____] I am representing myself: [yes / no]

2. Describe your child today (two or three sentences)

Child's first name or initials, age and grade: _____

The current schedule, in plain words: _____

Daily life, in your own words (school, care, activities): _____

3. State your request

The order I am asking for, in my own words: _____

_____

4. Preview the evidence (three or four facts)

Fact (date and what happened)	Shown by: exhibit number or witness

5. Close (one or two sentences)

Closing in my own words: _____

My request again, in one sentence: _____

My 30-second version

Who I am: _____ My request: _____

The one fact I would mention, and its exhibit number: _____

Notes for practice (timing, words to slow down on)

General template for organizing your own information. It is not legal advice and not a court-approved form. Court rules and required forms vary by state and county, so check your court's local rules and self-help center. Custody Commander is optional self-help software: keep your dated events and evidence in one place, so each fact you choose to mention sits next to the exhibit that shows it. It does not write, review or file your statement. Free plan with no card, or try Full Suite free for 7 days; see custodycommander.com for current trial and pricing terms.