

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILING AN ANSWER

### What is an answer?

The answer is the defendant's response to the plaintiff's complaint. The answer tells the court which parts of the complaint you agree with and which parts you disagree with. The answer form also allows you to tell the court if you think it does not have [jurisdiction](#) to make a decision, and to [counterclaim](#) by asking for what you want.

### What will happen if I do not file an answer?

If you do not file an answer, the plaintiff may ask the court to [default](#) you and finish the case without your participation. This means the judge may decide the case without hearing your side. You have **20 days** (40 days if you were served outside the United States) to file your answer.

### Do I need to tell the court why I disagree with the plaintiff?

No. Both the complaint and answer should contain the facts: who everyone is and what you want. At this point, no one has to explain why they disagree. If you and the plaintiff disagree about what should happen, you can tell the judge your side at [trial](#).

### How do I fill out the answer form?

It will be a lot easier to fill out the answer if you first read through the the documents plaintiff gave you. Keep the plaintiff's complaint and your answer form together in front of you.

1. Start with the plaintiff's complaint. It will probably have two sections:
  - the "Complaint";
  - the "Prayer for Relief" or "Request for Relief."
2. Next, look at the answer form. It usually has four sections:
  - the "Answer," which is where you explain which sections of the complaint you agree with or don't agree with;
  - the "Affirmative Defenses," where you state any arguments that challenge the plaintiff's right to bring the case;
  - the "Counterclaims," which is where you provide information about what you are asking to happen in the case (for example, how you want to divide property and debt, or what the parenting plan should be for any children);
  - the "Prayer for Relief" or "Request for Relief," which tells the court what specific things you want ordered.
3. Once you understand the layout of the complaint and the answer, you are ready to fill out the answer. Keep the complaint in front of you, because you will need to refer to it as you go through the answer form.
  - At the top of the answer, write your name and contact information. Then fill out the rest of the top portion, called the "case caption," **exactly** as it is filled out on the complaint (the location of court, the plaintiff's name, the defendant's name, and the case number).
  - Fill out the rest of the answer form according to the instructions on the form.

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4. When all four sections are complete (the Answer, the Affirmative Defenses, the Counterclaims, and the Request for Relief), sign the form and attach any other necessary forms or documents.
5. Give a copy of your answer and all attachments to the plaintiff. This is called “service.” You must fill out a [certificate of service](#) to show how and when you did this. The court will not process your documents until the certificate of service is complete. See [ak-courts.info/tfservice](#) for the different ways you can serve the plaintiff depending on your situation.

**For TrueFiling Users:** If the plaintiff is also using TrueFiling **or** provided an email to the court, you can do service as part of Step 6 below. TrueFiling will automatically create a certificate of service for you.

**For Non-TrueFiling Users:** Fill out the certificate of service on the answer form. If your answer does not already include a certificate of service section, fill out and attach a separate certificate of service. You can use [TF-700](#).

6. File your answer with the court.

**For TrueFiling Users:** Create a TrueFiling account and upload your answer and all attachments as one “bundle.” See [ak-courts.info/tfhowto](#) for detailed instructions on using TrueFiling.

**For Non-TrueFiling Users:** Make two copies of the answer and all attachments – one for you for your records, and one for the plaintiff. File the **original** answer and all attachments at the courthouse. Serve a copy of everything you file in court on the plaintiff, in the way and on the date you wrote on your certificate of service in Step 5 above.