



OPEN LAW SERVICES INSTITUTE
— OPEN KNOWLEDGE. GREATER JUSTICE. —

OLSI CIVIL LEGAL GUIDE · FLORIDA STATE TRIAL COURTS

How to Start a Civil Case in Florida

From choosing the right court to serving the defendant — the decisions and documents that get a lawsuit properly off the ground. For self-represented litigants, rigorous enough for new counsel.

JURISDICTION

Florida State Courts

AUDIENCE

**Self-Represented &
New Counsel**

LAST REVIEWED

June 2026

READING TIME

~50 min

WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---------------------------------|
| 01 | What it means to start a case | 02 | The six stages of filing suit |
| 03 | Which court: circuit, county, small claims | 04 | Personal jurisdiction & venue |
| 05 | The statute of limitations | 06 | Anatomy of a complaint |
| 07 | Counts, elements & the demand | 08 | Sample: Complaint |
| 09 | The civil cover sheet | 10 | Filing fees — and waivers |
| 11 | Filing & the summons | 12 | Serving the defendant |
| 13 | Hard-to-serve defendants | 14 | The response & default |
| 15 | Mediation | 16 | Checklist & free legal research |

IMPORTANT — PLEASE READ

Open Law Services Institute is not a law firm and does not provide legal advice. This guide gives general legal information to help you understand court procedure. It cannot tell you what to do in your specific case, and using it does not create an attorney-client relationship. For advice about your situation, consult a Florida-licensed attorney. Learn more at www.openlawservices.org.

START HERE

Starting a lawsuit is a sequence of decisions — get the early ones right

A civil case begins when you file a complaint and serve the defendant. But before you file, you make choices that can decide whether the case survives at all.

You must pick the **right court**, file before the **deadline** runs, draft a complaint that actually **states a claim**, pay (or waive) the **filing fee**, and **serve** the defendant the way the law requires. A misstep at any of these steps can get your case dismissed — sometimes permanently.

WATCH OUT · THE DEADLINE COMES FIRST

Every claim has a **statute of limitations**. Florida’s 2023 tort-reform law (HB 837) shortened the deadline for most **negligence** claims from four years to **two**.¹² If you are near a deadline, that is your most urgent issue — see Stage 1.

What “starting” actually involves

Filing the complaint opens the case and stops the limitations clock. But the defendant is not legally in the case until they are properly *served* — and you generally have **120 days** from filing to accomplish that.²⁵ This guide walks both halves: getting the complaint right, and getting it into the defendant’s hands the right way.

PRACTICE POINTER

If your dispute is small and straightforward, ask whether **small claims** (claims of \$8,000 or less) is the better path — its rules are simpler and designed for people without lawyers.⁴

THE ROAD AHEAD

Starting a case follows a repeatable, six-stage path

This guide walks each stage in order. The progress bar at the top of each stage shows where you are.



1 • Pick the court

Choose the court with power over the subject, the defendant, and the right location — circuit, county, or small claims — and confirm you are inside the deadline.

2 • Draft the complaint

Write a short, plain statement of your claim: the parties, the basis for jurisdiction and venue, the facts, your legal counts, and what you want.

3 • Pay or waive fees

Pay the filing fee — or, if you cannot afford it, apply to the clerk for a determination of civil indigent status.

4 • File

File the complaint, civil cover sheet, and summons through the e-filing portal; the clerk issues the summons.

5 • Serve the defendant

Have the summons and complaint delivered to the defendant the way Chapter 48 requires — within 120 days — and file proof of service.

6 • Next steps

The defendant has 20 days to respond; if they do not, you may seek a default. Many courts will also order the case to mediation.

WATCH OUT • THREE WAYS TO GET DISMISSED EARLY

The most common early dismissals come from filing in the **wrong court**, missing the **statute of limitations**, or **defective service**. This guide flags each one as you reach it.



STAGE 1 · PICK THE COURT

Which court has power over the subject: circuit, county, or small claims

Florida trial courts are split by the *amount in controversy* and the type of case. Filing in the wrong one wastes time and money.

Small claims — \$8,000 or less

Governed by the simplified Florida Small Claims Rules, designed for self-represented parties. The dollar limit excludes costs, interest, and attorney's fees.⁴

County court — up to \$50,000

Handles most everyday disputes — contracts, consumer matters, landlord-tenant — where the amount in controversy does not exceed \$50,000.²

Circuit court — over \$50,000 & special matters

Handles larger money claims and categories assigned by law — including equity, foreclosures, probate, family, and injunctions.¹

PRACTICE POINTER · COUNT CAREFULLY

The *amount in controversy* is what you claim in good faith, not what you might recover. If your claim genuinely exceeds a threshold, file in the higher court — suing for less just to stay in a lower court can forfeit the rest of your claim.

WATCH OUT · SOME CASES BELONG IN CIRCUIT COURT REGARDLESS OF AMOUNT

Equitable claims (asking the court to order someone to do or stop something), foreclosures, and certain other matters go to circuit court even when little or no money is at stake. Check the subject, not just the dollars.



STAGE 1 · PICK THE COURT

Power over the defendant (jurisdiction) and the right county (venue)

Beyond the type of court, two more questions decide *where* you can sue: does Florida have personal jurisdiction over this defendant, and which county is the proper venue?

Personal jurisdiction & the long-arm statute

A Florida court has personal jurisdiction over an out-of-state defendant only if Florida's **long-arm statute** reaches the defendant's conduct and the defendant has sufficient minimum contacts with Florida.⁵ Florida applies a two-step *Venetian Salami* analysis: first the statute, then federal due-process contacts.⁶ Even a single act — like committing a tort in Florida or breaching a contract to be performed here — can suffice.⁷

Venue — the right county

For most actions, venue is proper where the **defendant resides**, where the **cause of action accrued**, or where the **property** in dispute is located.⁸ Actions against corporations have their own venue rule,⁹ and a court may transfer a case for the convenience of the parties and witnesses.¹⁰

PRACTICE POINTER · WATCH FOR A FORUM-SELECTION CLAUSE

If your dispute arises from a contract, read it for a **forum-selection** or venue clause — Florida courts generally enforce them, and one can require you to sue in a particular county or even another state.



STAGE 1 · PICK THE COURT

The statute of limitations: the deadline that can end a case before it starts

Every claim has a filing deadline. Miss it, and the defendant can have your case dismissed no matter how strong it is.

Florida sets limitations periods by claim type.¹¹ Common periods include **five years** for written contracts and **four years** for many other actions — but the 2023 tort-reform law (HB 837) shortened most **negligence** claims to **two years**.¹² The clock generally starts when the cause of action accrues.

2 yrs

most negligence claims (since HB 837)

4 yrs

many statutory & oral-contract claims

5 yrs

actions on a written contract

These are general examples only; your specific claim may differ. Always confirm the exact period for your claim before relying on it.

WATCH OUT · REPOSE AND TOLLING

A separate **statute of repose** can bar some claims after a fixed number of years no matter when the harm is discovered,¹³ while certain circumstances can **toll** (pause) the clock.¹⁴ These are technical — if timing is close, treat it as urgent and get advice.



STAGE 2 · DRAFT THE COMPLAINT

Anatomy of a complaint, part one

The complaint is the document that starts your case. Florida requires only a “short and plain statement” — but it must contain specific building blocks.¹⁵

a Caption

The court, county, case style, and a space for the case number the clerk assigns. The title names the document, e.g., “Complaint.”¹⁸

b Parties

Identify the plaintiff(s) and defendant(s) by full legal name, and state each party’s residency or status (individual, corporation, LLC) — this supports jurisdiction and service.

c Jurisdiction & venue

A short paragraph stating why this court has subject-matter and personal jurisdiction (often the amount in controversy and the defendant’s Florida contacts) and why venue is proper here.

d General allegations

Numbered paragraphs telling the story in *ultimate facts* — what happened, when, and who did what — not evidence and not legal argument.

PRACTICE POINTER · ONE FACT PER PARAGRAPH

Florida pleadings are written in numbered paragraphs, each “limited as far as practicable to a statement of a single set of circumstances.” Short, numbered paragraphs make it easy for the defendant to admit or deny — and easy for the judge to follow.



STAGE 2 · DRAFT THE COMPLAINT

Anatomy of a complaint, part two: counts & the demand

e Counts

Each legal claim is its own numbered *count* (e.g., Count I — Breach of Contract). A count re-alleges the relevant facts, then states the **elements** of that claim and alleges facts meeting each one.

f Demand for judgment

A “wherefore” clause stating the relief you want — damages, an injunction, a declaration — and, where required, that the amount is within the court’s jurisdiction.¹⁶

g Signature

Your signature block. A self-represented party signs and gives an address, e-mail, and phone. Some complaints (and all those seeking certain relief) must be **verified** — sworn to under oath.

h Exhibits

Documents your claim is based on — the contract, the promissory note — are attached and become part of the complaint.¹⁷

PRACTICE POINTER · PLEAD THE ELEMENTS

Before writing a count, list the legal elements of that claim, then make sure a numbered paragraph alleges facts for each one. A complaint that skips an element is the classic target of a motion to dismiss for failure to state a cause of action.

WATCH OUT · ATTACH THE RIGHT DOCUMENTS

When a claim is founded on a written instrument, the rule requires you to attach a copy. Where an attached document contradicts a vague allegation, the document controls — so make sure your exhibits actually support what you plead.



STAGE 2 · TEMPLATE

Sample: Complaint

A simple two-count complaint. Replace each highlighted field, add a count for each legal claim, and attach any contract or document your claim relies on.

TEMPLATE · COMPLAINT

Fill in the highlighted fields — do not file as-is

IN THE COUNTY COURT OF THE ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY,
FLORIDA

PLAINTIFF NAME,
Plaintiff,

Case No.: (clerk assigns)

v.

DEFENDANT NAME,
Defendant.

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff NAME sues Defendant NAME and alleges:

Parties, Jurisdiction & Venue

1. Plaintiff is a resident of [county]. Defendant is a [resident/Florida LLC].
2. This is an action for damages [exceeding \$ / not exceeding \$50,000], within this Court's jurisdiction.
3. Venue is proper in [county] because [the cause of action accrued here].

General Allegations

4. [What happened, in numbered ultimate facts.]

Count I – [Breach of Contract]

5. Plaintiff re-alleges paragraphs 1–4.
6. [Allege facts for each element of the claim.]

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendant for [damages, interest, and costs], and such further relief as the Court deems just.

/s/ Your Name Your Full Name, Self-Represented Address · Email · Phone



STAGE 2 · DRAFT THE COMPLAINT

The civil cover sheet

Almost every new civil case must be filed with a **civil cover sheet** — a standardized form that tells the clerk how to classify and route your case.

Florida Rule of Civil Procedure Form 1.997 is the civil cover sheet.¹⁹ It asks for the case type (contract, negligence, real property, and so on), the amount of the claim, and whether the case is related to any other. The clerk uses it to assign the case to the correct division and docket; it is not evidence and does not become part of your pleadings.

PRACTICE POINTER · FIND THE CURRENT FORM

Get the cover sheet from your clerk’s website or the Florida Courts forms page so you have the current version. Many clerks’ e-filing systems generate it for you as part of the filing process — and for a self-represented party, the clerk completes it from the information you provide if needed.

WATCH OUT · MATCH THE CASE TYPE TO YOUR COURT

The case type you select should be consistent with the court you chose in Stage 1. A mismatch — for example, marking a \$9,000 claim as a circuit-court matter — can cause routing delays or a transfer.



STAGE 3 · PAY OR WAIVE FEES

Filing fees — what it costs to open a case

Opening a civil case requires a filing fee set by statute. The amount depends on the court and the size of the claim.

Circuit-court filing fees are set by section 28.241,²⁰ and county-court fees by section 34.041,²¹ with county-court amounts tiered by the size of the claim (small claims, mid-range, and up to the \$50,000 limit). The clerk collects the fee when you file; you pay through the e-filing portal's payment system.

What the fee does and doesn't cover

The filing fee opens the case and includes issuance of the summons. It does **not** cover the cost of *service* — the sheriff's fee or a private process server's charge — which you pay separately (Stage 5).

PRACTICE POINTER · BUDGET FOR SERVICE TOO

Plan for two costs at the start: the filing fee, and the service fee. If paying the filing fee is itself a hardship, the next page explains how to ask the court to waive it.



STAGE 3 · PAY OR WAIVE FEES

Can't afford the fee? Apply for civil indigent status

Florida law lets people who cannot afford court costs ask to have them deferred or waived, so that filing fees are not a barrier to the courthouse.

You apply to the **clerk of court** for a determination of **civil indigent status** using the statutory application.²² The clerk — not the judge — makes the initial determination based on your household income, assets, and dependents against the statutory thresholds.²³ If the clerk finds you indigent, your filing fees and certain service costs are deferred or waived.

If the clerk denies the application

A denial is not the end — you may ask a judge to review the clerk's decision. The application itself explains the income standards and what to submit.

WATCH OUT · BE ACCURATE AND COMPLETE

The indigency application is signed under oath and asks for detailed financial information. Fill it out honestly and completely; an incomplete application is the most common reason for delay, and a false one can have serious consequences.



STAGE 3 · TEMPLATE

Sample: Application for Civil Indigent Status

Use the clerk's official current form; this shows the kind of information it asks for. The clerk reviews it against the statutory income standards.

TEMPLATE · INDIGENT STATUS APPLICATION

Fill in the highlighted fields — do not file as-is

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION OF CIVIL INDIGENT STATUS

(Filed with the Clerk of Court under section 57.082, Florida Statutes. The clerk determines eligibility.)

Applicant: Full name

Case No.: (if assigned)

1. Number of people dependent on me for support:
2. I receive (check all): SNAP TANF SSI other public assistance
3. My net monthly income is: \$
4. I own (assets): [describe cash, accounts, vehicles, property]

I certify under oath that the information is true.

/s/ Your Name Your Full Name, Applicant Sworn / signed before the clerk or notary as required



STAGE 4 · FILE

Filing the case — and getting the summons issued

You file electronically through the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal. Three documents usually go in together: the complaint, the civil cover sheet, and a summons for each defendant.

File through the portal at myflcourtagency.com, which most filers must use for electronic filing.⁴⁰ Upload the complaint and civil cover sheet, pay the fee (or attach your indigency application), and submit a proposed **summons** for each defendant. The **clerk issues** the summons — signing and sealing it — which is what gives it legal force.²⁴

What you get back

Once accepted, the clerk assigns a **case number** and returns the issued summons. You then arrange for the summons and a copy of the complaint to be *served* on the defendant (Stage 5).

WATCH OUT · THE SUMMONS MUST BE ISSUED FIRST

You cannot serve a summons you printed yourself — it must be **issued** (signed and sealed) by the clerk. Serving an un-issued summons is invalid and can force you to start service over.



STAGE 4 · TEMPLATE

Sample: Summons

You prepare the summons; the **clerk issues it**. It tells the defendant they have 20 days to respond and that a default may follow if they do not.

TEMPLATE · SUMMONS

Fill in the highlighted fields — do not file as-is

IN THE COUNTY COURT, IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

PLAINTIFF v. DEFENDANT

Case No.:

SUMMONS

THE STATE OF FLORIDA — To Defendant NAME and ADDRESS:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that an action has been filed against you. You are required to serve a written response to the attached Complaint on the plaintiff, [your name and address], within 20 days after service of this summons (not counting the day of service), and to file the original with the clerk of this court either before service or immediately thereafter. If you fail to do so, a default may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.

DATED on _____.

Clerk of the Court

By: _____ Deputy Clerk (clerk signs and seals)



STAGE 5 · SERVE THE DEFENDANT

Service of process: the rules you cannot skip

Service is how the defendant is officially notified and brought under the court's power. Florida's Chapter 48 controls exactly how it must be done.

Who may serve

You may **not** serve the papers yourself. Service is made by the **sheriff** of the county where the defendant is found, or by a **certified process server** appointed or listed for that circuit.³² The server delivers the summons and a copy of the complaint and then files a **return of service** documenting how, when, and on whom it was served.³¹

The 120-day deadline

You generally must complete service within **120 days** after filing the complaint; if you do not, and cannot show good cause or excusable neglect, the court may dismiss the case as to the unserved defendant.²⁵

PRACTICE POINTER · ARRANGE SERVICE IMMEDIATELY

Hand the issued summons and complaint to the sheriff or a process server as soon as you receive them. Service can take time — especially if the defendant is hard to find — and the 120-day clock is already running.



STAGE 5 · SERVE THE DEFENDANT

Serving individuals versus businesses

How service is accomplished depends on *who* the defendant is. Get the method right for the type of defendant.

1 An individual

Deliver a copy to the person, or leave it at their usual place of abode with a person residing there who is 15 or older and inform that person of its contents — substitute service.²⁶

2 A corporation

Serve a registered agent, or specified officers or employees in the order the statute prescribes.²⁸

3 A limited liability company

Serve the LLC's registered agent; the statute provides the order of alternatives if the agent cannot be served.²⁷

PRACTICE POINTER · FIND THE REGISTERED AGENT

For a Florida business, look up the registered agent and address for free on the Division of Corporations site (Sunbiz). Serving the correct registered agent is the cleanest way to perfect service on a company.

WATCH OUT · STRICT COMPLIANCE

Service statutes are strictly construed. Leaving papers with the wrong person, at the wrong address, or omitting the required notice can void the service — and a default obtained on defective service can be set aside.



STAGE 5 · SERVE THE DEFENDANT

When the defendant is hard to serve

Some defendants cannot be found or are out of state. Florida provides alternative methods — but each has strict prerequisites.

Nonresidents doing business in Florida

A nonresident (or a resident who later leaves) who operates a business or commits certain acts in Florida can be served through **substituted service on the Secretary of State**, provided you also give the defendant the required notice and meet the statute's conditions.²⁹ Specific statutes govern nonresidents engaged in business here.³⁰

Diligent search

Before a court will allow many forms of substituted or constructive service, you must show a **diligent search and inquiry** to locate the defendant. Document every step — addresses checked, databases searched, people contacted.

WATCH OUT · THESE METHODS ARE TECHNICAL

Substituted service on the Secretary of State and constructive service by publication have exact, unforgiving requirements. If you must use them, read the governing statute closely — or get advice — because a defect here is a common ground for setting aside the whole case.



STAGE 5 · SERVE THE DEFENDANT

Serving a defendant abroad

If your defendant is in another country, service is governed by international rules — slower and more technical than domestic service, but well-defined.

The Hague Service Convention

When the defendant is located in a country that is a party to the **Hague Service Convention**, service generally must follow it — most often by transmitting the documents to that country’s designated **Central Authority**, which serves them and returns a certificate.⁴⁴ Many countries require a **translation** into the local language. You must still satisfy Florida’s long-arm statute for the court to have jurisdiction.⁵

Service outside the state generally

Florida also authorizes **service outside the state**, which may be made in the same manner as service within Florida by a person authorized to serve process where the defendant is found.⁴³ For countries *not* party to the Hague Convention, service may proceed by letters rogatory or other means the law and that country permit.

WATCH OUT · FOREIGN SERVICE IS SLOW — PLAN FOR MONTHS

Service through a foreign Central Authority can take many months. The 120-day domestic deadline may be enlarged for good cause when foreign service is required, but do not assume it — start immediately, keep proof of every step, and consider getting help, as a defect here can unravel the entire case.

PRACTICE POINTER · CONFIRM THE COUNTRY’S REQUIREMENTS

Each Hague country files declarations on translation, accepted methods, and whether it objects to service by mail. Check the current requirements for the specific country before you transmit, so the Central Authority does not reject your request.



STAGE 5 · SERVE THE DEFENDANT

Proving service: the return

Service is not complete in the court’s eyes until proof is on file. The *return of service* is that proof — and it must be filed.

After serving the defendant, the sheriff or process server completes and files a **return of service** stating the date, time, manner, and place of service and the identity of the person served.³¹ Review it carefully as soon as it is filed: the return is the foundation for everything that follows, including a default if the defendant does not respond.

What to check on the return

- The defendant’s name exactly matches the complaint and summons.
- The date of service is within 120 days of filing.
- The manner of service matches the defendant’s type (individual, corporation, LLC).
- For substitute service, the person served and the required notice are documented.
- The server is a sheriff or a properly appointed/certified process server.

PRACTICE POINTER

Keep a copy of the filed return with your case file. If the defendant later challenges service, the return is your first line of proof that you did it correctly.



STAGE 6 · NEXT STEPS

The defendant's response — and default if there is none

Once served, the defendant is on the clock. What happens next depends on whether they respond.

A defendant generally has **20 days** after service to serve a response — an answer or a motion directed at the complaint.³³ If the defendant files nothing within that time, you may ask the clerk or the court for a **default**, and then a default judgment for the relief your complaint supports.³⁴

If the defendant does respond

The defendant may file an *answer* (admitting or denying each paragraph and raising affirmative defenses) or a *motion to dismiss* attacking the complaint. If a motion to dismiss is filed, the case moves into motion practice — covered in OLSI's *Motion Practice* guide — and the case proceeds into discovery, covered in the *Discovery* guide.

WATCH OUT · A DEFAULT IS NOT AUTOMATIC

You must **request** a default; the court does not enter one on its own. And a default entered where service was defective, or where the defendant had filed *something*, can be set aside — so confirm both the return of service and the docket before you move.



STAGE 6 · NEXT STEPS

Mediation: most civil cases are sent to settle

Florida courts rely heavily on mediation, and many will order your case to mediation before trial. It is a confidential, structured negotiation — not a hearing.

Courts may refer civil cases to mediation,³⁷ which proceeds under the Rules of Civil Procedure governing mediation.³⁵ A neutral mediator helps the parties try to reach their own agreement; the mediator does not decide the case. Florida’s court-ordered mediation rules set who attends, how it is scheduled, and what happens if a party fails to appear.³⁶

Confidentiality

What is said in mediation is **confidential** by statute, with limited exceptions, so parties can speak candidly without those statements being used against them later.³⁸ If you settle, the agreement is typically reduced to writing and signed; if you do not, the case proceeds.

PRACTICE POINTER · COME PREPARED TO MEDIATION

Bring your key documents, know your bottom line and your best alternative if the case does not settle, and be ready to explain your numbers. Mediation is often the best, lowest-cost chance to resolve the dispute on your own terms.

BEFORE YOU FILE

A quick pre-filing checklist

- I confirmed the right court (small claims, county, or circuit) for my claim.
- Florida has jurisdiction over the defendant, and venue is proper in my county.
- I am inside the statute of limitations for every claim.
- My complaint states the parties, jurisdiction, venue, facts, and a count for each claim.
- I pleaded facts for every element and attached any contract or document.
- I completed the civil cover sheet and a summons for each defendant.
- I paid the filing fee or filed an indigency application.
- I arranged service by sheriff or certified process server and will file the return.

Where to find Florida law — for free

[Florida Statutes \(Ch. 26, 34, 47, 48, 95\) — flsenate.gov](#)

[Rules of Civil Procedure & forms — floridabar.org](#)

[Florida Courts Help / DIY Florida](#)

[Registered agents — Sunbiz \(dos.fl.gov/sunbiz\)](#)

[Court forms — forms.justia.com/florida](#)

[Free case law — Google Scholar](#)

PRACTICE POINTER · ALWAYS VERIFY LOCALLY

Statutes, rules, fees, and forms change, and every clerk and circuit has local requirements. Before filing, confirm the current statute, your circuit's administrative orders, fee schedule, and the clerk's procedures. For more OLSI guides, visit www.openlawservices.org.

SOURCES & AUTHORITIES

Endnotes

Every legal proposition in this guide is grounded in the authorities below, cited in Bluebook form and verified against official Florida sources as of June 2026.

- 1 § 26.012, Fla. Stat. (2025) (circuit court jurisdiction). [↵](#)
- 2 § 34.01, Fla. Stat. (2025) (county court jurisdiction; amount in controversy up to \$50,000). [↵](#)
- 3 § 34.01(1), Fla. Stat. (2025) (county court civil jurisdiction). [↵](#)
- 4 Fla. Sm. Cl. R. 7.010(b) (2026) (Small Claims Rules govern actions of \$8,000 or less, exclusive of costs, interest, and attorney's fees). [↵](#)
- 5 § 48.193, Fla. Stat. (2025) (acts subjecting a person to long-arm jurisdiction). [↵](#)
- 6 *Venetian Salami Co. v. Parthenais*, 554 So. 2d 499, 502 (Fla. 1989) (two-step long-arm analysis). [↵](#)
- 7 *Wendt v. Horowitz*, 822 So. 2d 1252, 1260 (Fla. 2002) (connecting acts to Florida). [↵](#)
- 8 § 47.011, Fla. Stat. (2025) (venue; residence, accrual, or property). [↵](#)
- 9 § 47.051, Fla. Stat. (2025) (venue in actions against domestic and foreign corporations). [↵](#)
- 10 § 47.122, Fla. Stat. (2025) (transfer for convenience of parties and witnesses). [↵](#)
- 11 § 95.11, Fla. Stat. (2025) (statutes of limitations by claim type). [↵](#)
- 12 § 95.11(3), Fla. Stat. (2023), as amended by ch. 2023-15, § 18, Laws of Fla. (HB 837) (two-year limitations period for negligence). [↵](#)
- 13 § 95.031, Fla. Stat. (2025) (statutes of repose). [↵](#)
- 14 § 95.051, Fla. Stat. (2025) (tolling of the limitations period). [↵](#)
- 15 Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.110(b) (2026) (short and plain statement of ultimate facts; single set of circumstances per paragraph). [↵](#)
- 16 Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.110(d) (2026) (demand for judgment). [↵](#)
- 17 Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.130(a) (2026) (instruments attached to and made part of pleadings). [↵](#)
- 18 Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.100(c) (2026) (caption and case style). [↵](#)
- 19 Fla. R. Civ. P. Form 1.997 (2026) (civil cover sheet). [↵](#)
- 20 § 28.241, Fla. Stat. (2025) (circuit court filing fees). [↵](#)
- 21 § 34.041, Fla. Stat. (2025) (county court filing fees, tiered by amount in controversy). [↵](#)
- 22 § 57.081, Fla. Stat. (2025) (costs and fees for indigent litigants). [↵](#)

SOURCES & AUTHORITIES (CONTINUED)

Endnotes

- 1 § 57.082, Fla. Stat. (2025) (determination of civil indigent status by the clerk). [↵](#)
- 2 Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.070(a) (2026) (issuance of summons by the clerk). [↵](#)
- 3 Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.070(j) (2026) (service within 120 days of filing; dismissal absent good cause). [↵](#)
- 4 § 48.031, Fla. Stat. (2025) (personal service; substitute service at usual place of abode). [↵](#)
- 5 § 48.062, Fla. Stat. (2025) (service on a limited liability company). [↵](#)
- 6 § 48.081, Fla. Stat. (2025) (service on a corporation). [↵](#)
- 7 § 48.161, Fla. Stat. (2025) (substituted service on the Secretary of State). [↵](#)
- 8 § 48.181, Fla. Stat. (2025) (service on nonresidents engaged in business in Florida). [↵](#)
- 9 § 48.21, Fla. Stat. (2025) (return of service). [↵](#)
- 10 § 48.27, Fla. Stat. (2025) (certified process servers). [↵](#)
- 11 Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.140(a)(1) (2026) (20 days to serve a responsive pleading after service of process). [↵](#)
- 12 Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.500 (2026) (defaults and final judgments thereon). [↵](#)
- 13 Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.700 (2026) (rules common to mediation and arbitration). [↵](#)
- 14 Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.710–1.720 (2026) (court-ordered mediation procedures). [↵](#)
- 15 § 44.102, Fla. Stat. (2025) (court-ordered mediation). [↵](#)
- 16 § 44.405, Fla. Stat. (2025) (confidentiality and privilege in mediation). [↵](#)
- 17 § 90.902, Fla. Stat. (2025) (self-authenticating documents). [↵](#)
- 18 Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.525 (2026) (electronic filing). [↵](#)
- 19 Ch. 2023-15, Laws of Fla. (HB 837) (2023) (civil-justice/tort reform). [↵](#)
- 20 § 768.81, Fla. Stat. (2023) (modified comparative negligence following HB 837). [↵](#)
- 21 § 48.194, Fla. Stat. (2025) (service of process outside the state). [↵](#)
- 22 Convention on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters, Nov. 15, 1965, 20 U.S.T. 361, 658 U.N.T.S. 163 (Hague Service Convention). [↵](#)

A note on citations: Florida statutes and rules are periodically amended — the 2023 HB 837 reforms and the 2025 procedural amendments changed several provisions cited here — so always confirm the current text of any statute, rule, or case before relying on it.