

Going to Crown Court

A booklet for children and young people
who are going to be witnesses in court



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For further details, please contact:

..... (name of supporter)

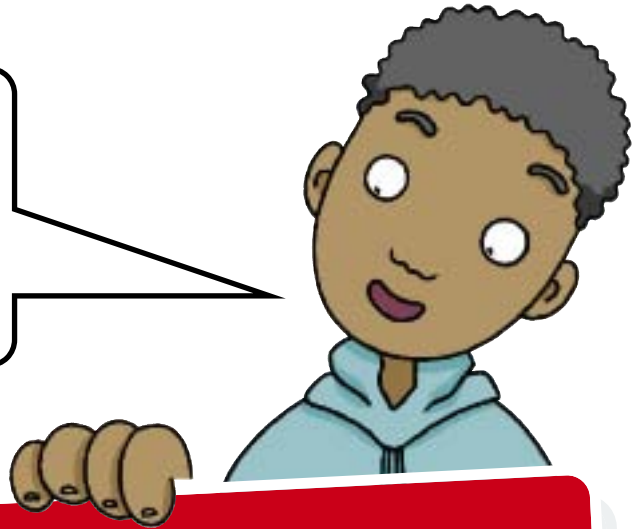
This book should be read with the assistance of an adult supporter who knows about court procedures and can answer the young witnesses' questions. The supporter can then pass on information about the young witness's needs at court to the police, Crown Prosecution Service and court staff.

Arrangements for supporting child witnesses vary in different parts of the country. The police will be able to give advice about the best person to talk to.

Most courts have a witness booklet containing information about the court, how to get there and local transport.

This booklet belongs to:

Children like you go to court every day to be witnesses. It's a very important job. Don't know what a witness is? This booklet is here to tell you!



You'll find out:

- 1 What a witness does
- 2 Who can help you to tell the court what you know
- 3 Who will be at the court
- 4 What happens at a court
- 5 What happens after you have been a witness

If you have any questions, ask the person who asked you to be a witness.

What is a witness?

A witness is someone who knows something important. That means *you* know something important!

Do you remember how you helped the police by answering their questions?

Now the people at a place called a court need your help. They need to hear what you know.

You may have seen something or heard something. Or perhaps something has happened to you.

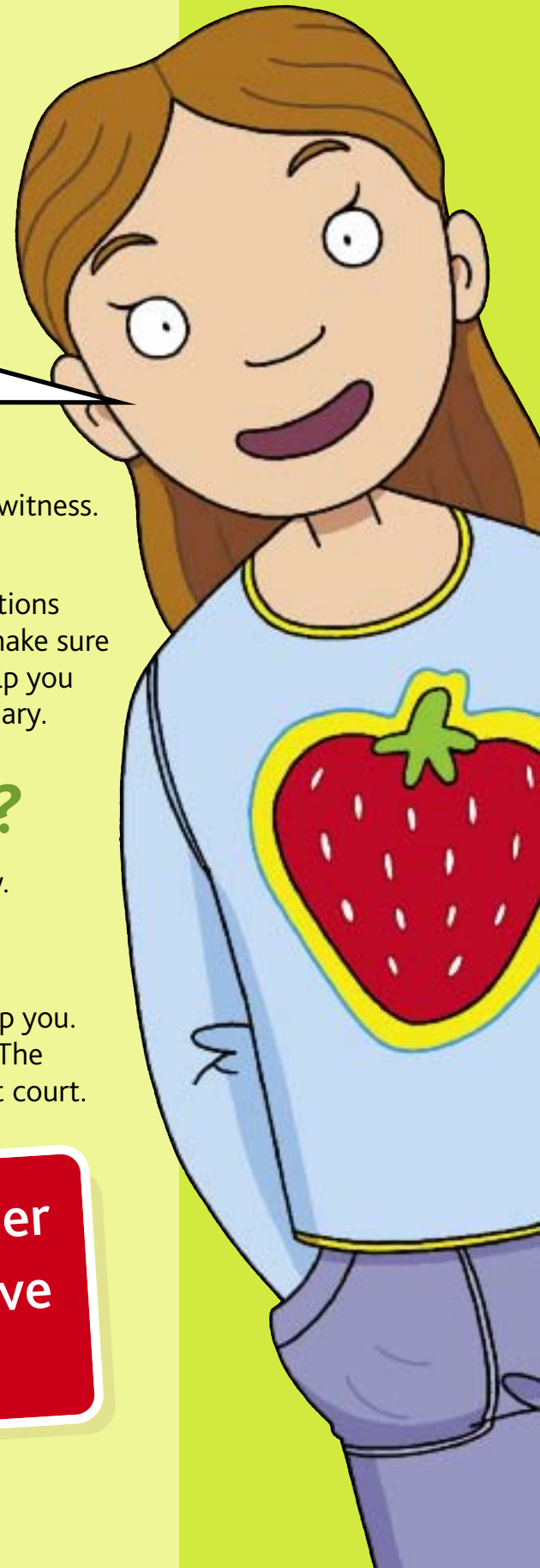
Telling the people at court what you know is called being a witness. What you tell the court is called your evidence.

Some questions will be difficult. The people asking the questions want to know what you can remember. They also need to make sure that you are telling the truth. You may have someone to help you understand the questions. This person is called an intermediary.

What is an intermediary?

An intermediary may help you tell the court what you know. They will also help the court understand what you say. An intermediary does not answer questions for you.

The judge will decide if you can have an intermediary to help you. If this happens, you will meet them before you go to court. The intermediary will sit with you while you answer questions at court.



It's very important to remember that witnesses – like you! – have not done anything wrong.

What is a court?

Courts are usually big buildings with lots of people in them. Inside there are rooms called courtrooms.

There are different kinds of courts. The court you visit might look like one of these shown here.



Why do people go to court?

Laws are important rules. They tell us things such as not to steal and not to hurt other people. When someone breaks one of these rules, it is called "breaking the law".

It is wrong to break the law. A person who breaks the law can

be punished. People go to court if the police think they have broken a law.

At court, people decide if someone has broken the law. You can help those people by talking about what you know.

What you say helps the people in court to make a very important decision. That's why being a witness is such an important job.

Who is in a court?

There are lots of people in a court. Each one has a different job to do and a different place to sit or stand.

Why not give these people some colour?



The witness tells the court about something that happened. You may be asked to be a witness by the defence lawyer or prosecutor.



The usher tells the witnesses where they need to go. The usher will tell you when it is your turn to talk to the people in court.



The intermediary helps you understand what is said to you. The intermediary can also help the people in court understand what you say to them. You will be able to meet the intermediary before the trial



The witness' supporter is a grown-up who goes to court to look after a young witness.



The judge is in charge of the court and listens carefully to what each person says. He or she may write down what is happening in court. The judge wears a wig and gown but you can ask him or her not to if you want to.



Police officers have already talked to people – witnesses, like you – who may know what happened.



The clerk takes care of the official court papers and helps the judge.



The defendant is the person who may have broken the law. The defendant sits in part of the courtroom called the dock.



The defence lawyer's job is to help the defendant. The defence lawyer tells the court what the defendant says happened.



The prosecutor tells the court about how the defendant may have broken the law. Like the defence lawyer, the prosecutor asks lots of questions.



The jury is a group of 12 ordinary people. Their job is to listen to you and the other witnesses. Then they decide if they think the defendant broke the law.



The note-taker writes down what everyone says in court.

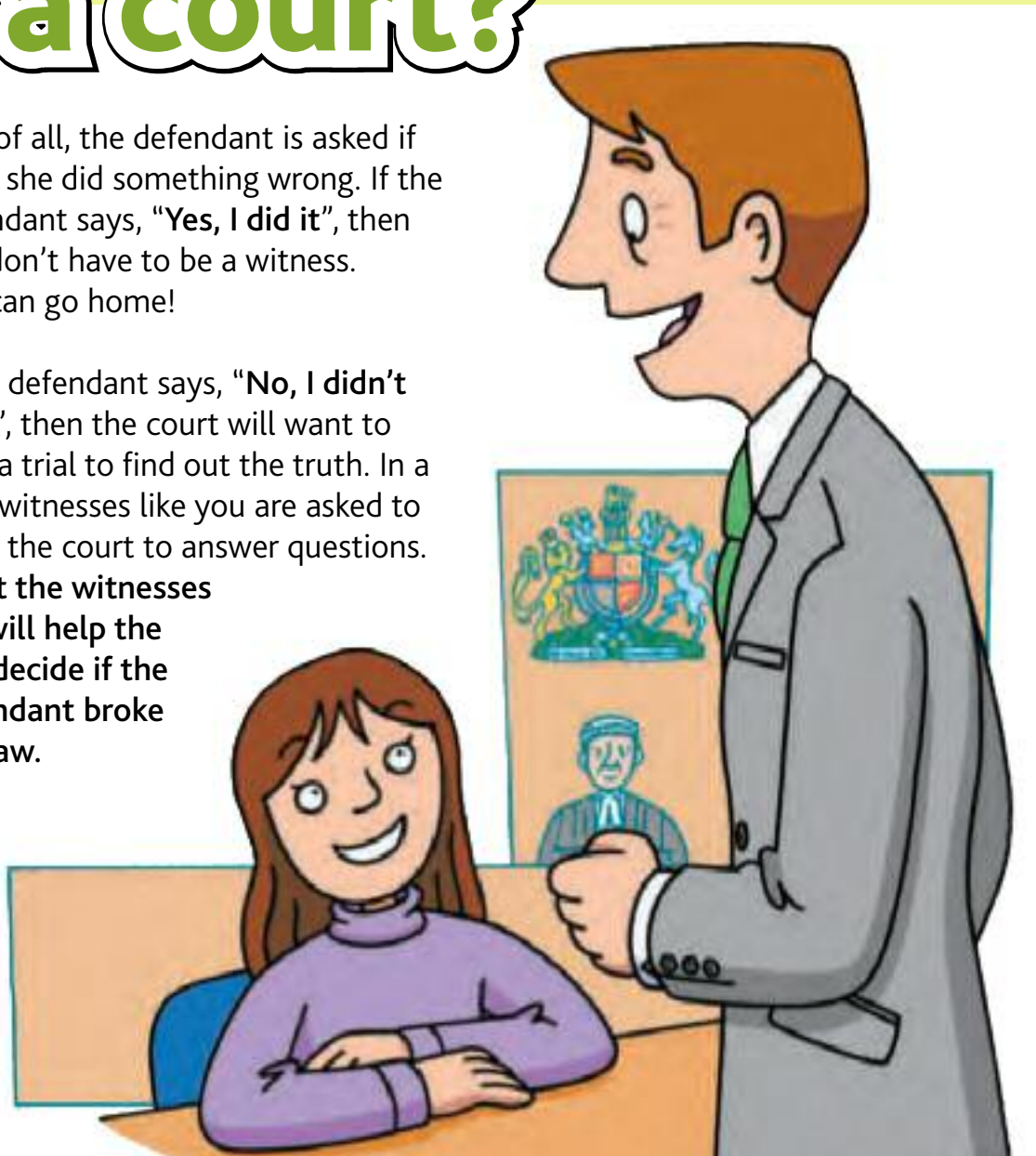
The public can sit quietly in special areas in some courts and listen to what everyone has to say.

What happens in a court?

First of all, the defendant is asked if he or she did something wrong. If the defendant says, "Yes, I did it", then you don't have to be a witness. You can go home!

If the defendant says, "No, I didn't do it", then the court will want to hold a trial to find out the truth. In a trial, witnesses like you are asked to go to the court to answer questions.

What the witnesses say will help the jury decide if the defendant broke the law.



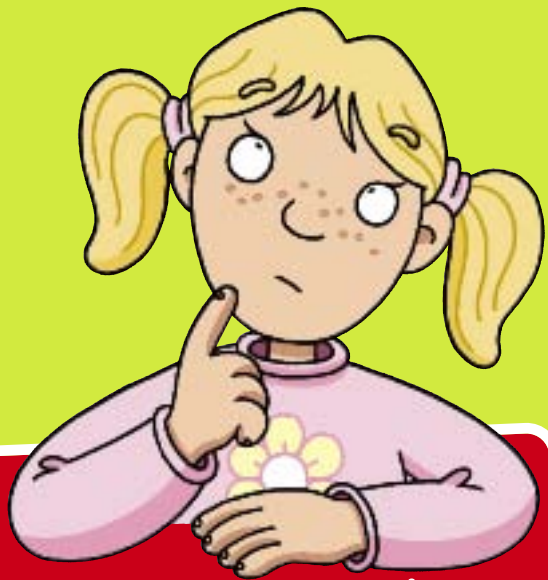
If the police made a visual recording of you when you spoke to them before, it will be shown in court and everyone will watch it. Then you will be asked some questions about what you said on the visual recording. You can watch your recording

before the trial to help you remember what you said.

The prosecutor and the defence lawyer will ask you questions. (Can't remember what these people do? Turn back to pages 4 and 5 for a reminder.)

The judge and jury listen to what everyone says. When all the questions and answers are finished, the jury leave the courtroom. They talk about what they have heard. Then they decide if they believe that the defendant broke the law.

When it's my turn, what do I have to do?

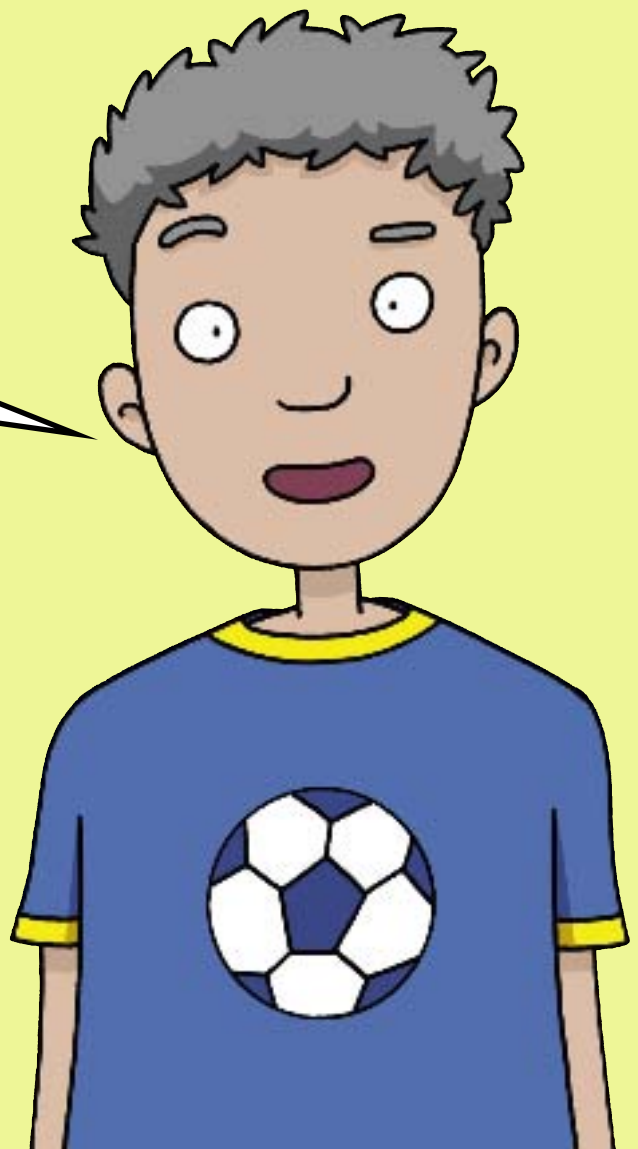


- 1 Listen carefully and make sure you understand each question
- 2 Answer the questions, if you can
- 3 And most importantly – tell the truth

Listening

It can be hard to speak in front of lots of people. So everyone will understand if you're a bit nervous.

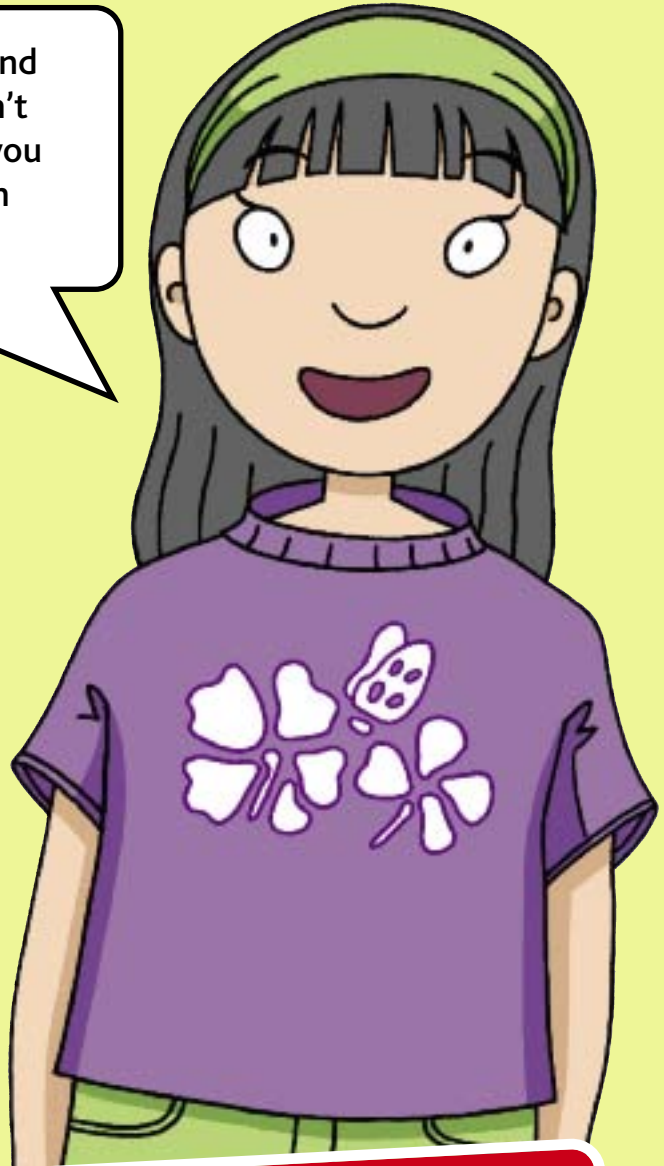
- Make sure you understand what every question means before you answer it. It's OK to say, "I don't understand."
- If you are asked the same question again in a different way, and you still don't understand, don't worry. You can say, "I'm sorry, but I still don't understand."
- Someone may ask a lot of hard questions at the same time. If this happens, just say, "Please ask me the question a bit at a time."



Answering

Think carefully before you answer and take as much time as you need. Don't add or leave out anything because you think the person asking the question wants you to.

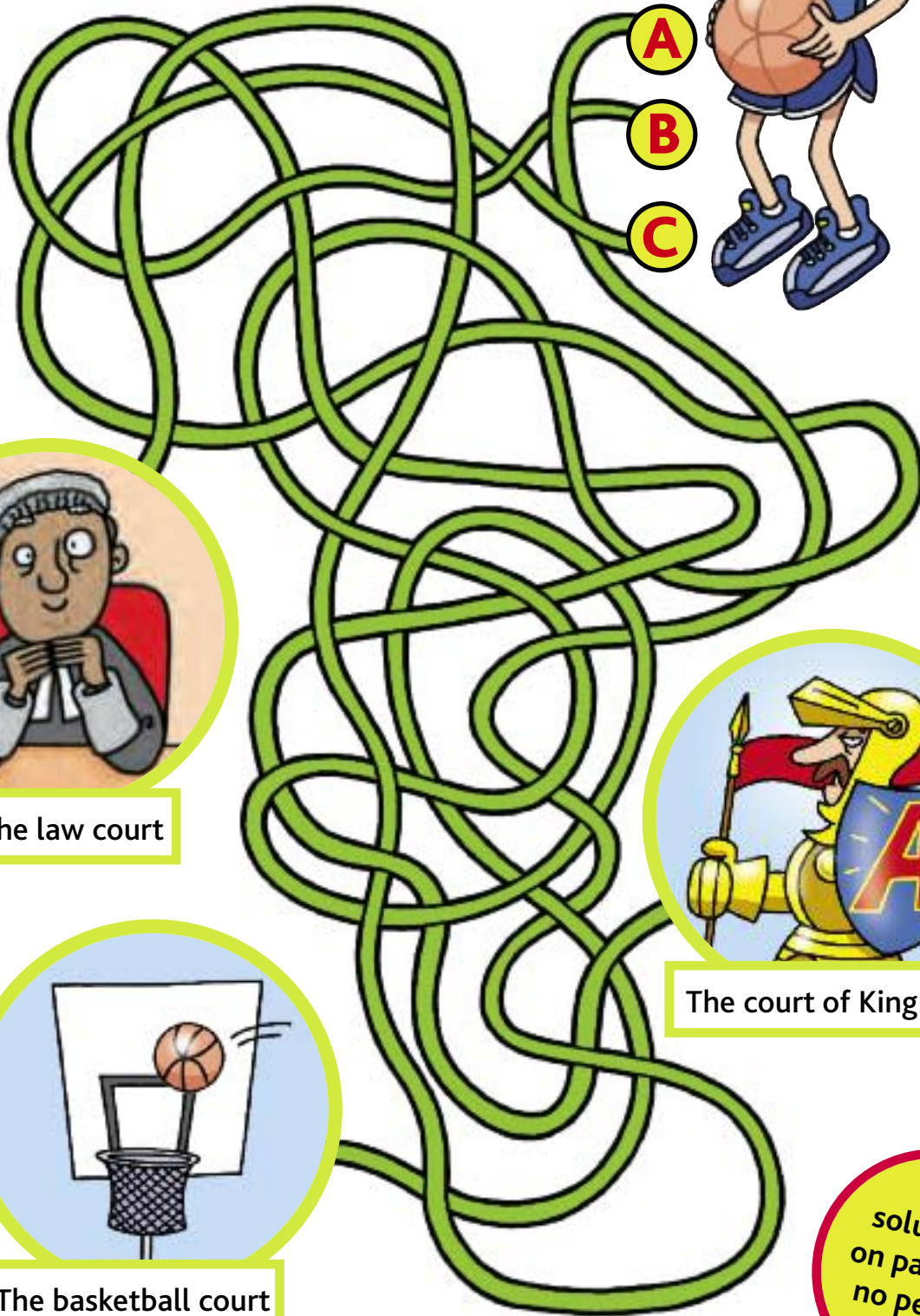
- Speak as clearly and loudly as you can. The judge and jury want to hear what you say.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, don't worry. Just say: "I don't know", or "I can't remember."
- You might be asked about things which are hard to talk about. No one will mind if you get upset.
- Remember the judge and jury will not be angry at anything you say. You have not done anything wrong.



The important thing is that you tell the truth. That means you can use any words you want to in court, even if you think they are rude or naughty.

Court out!

Uh-oh! This sports whizz needs to be at the court in two minutes. Problem is, he doesn't know which court! Can you work out which path leads to the basketball court?



The law court



The court of King Arthur



The basketball court

The solution is on page 18 – no peeking allowed!

Telling the truth...

...is the most important thing you have to do.

Do you know what it means to tell a lie? It means saying that something happened when you know it didn't. Or it can mean saying that something didn't happen when you know it did. It is wrong to tell a lie.

Some of the questions will be about something the defendant did or said. These may be things that only you and the defendant know about. Remember, the judge and jury were not there, so they need you to tell them what happened.

When you answer a question, try not to leave anything out. Never make anything up and never guess.

It's OK to tell a secret in court – as long as it's true.

Some questions may be difficult. The people asking the questions want to know what you can remember. They also need to make sure that you are telling the truth.

Nobody is allowed to tell you what to say. If anyone tries to, just ignore them. You are a witness because the people in court want to hear what happened – from you and in your own words.



Wordsearch

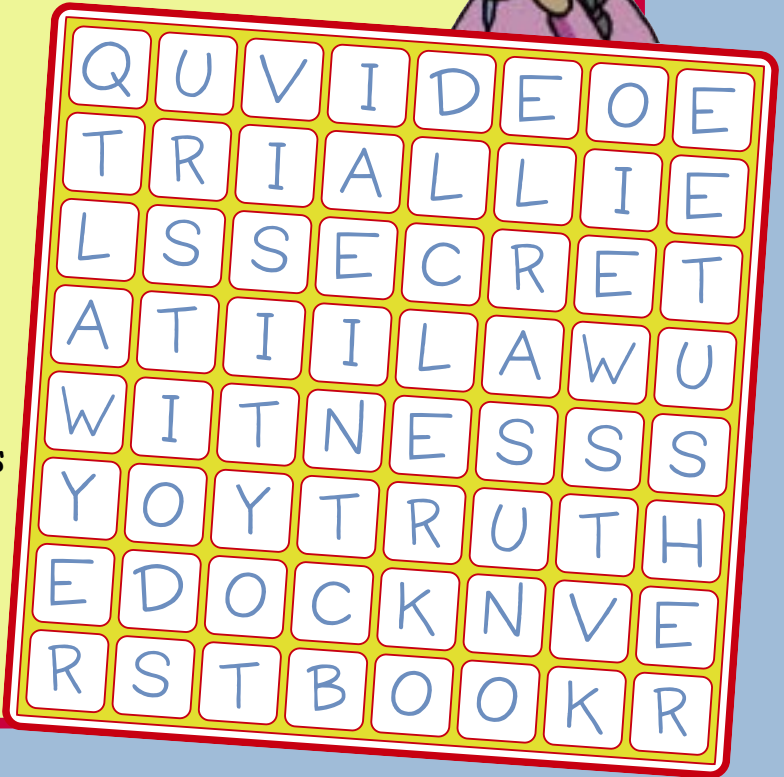


Can you find all the words listed below hidden in the grid? They can read across, up or down. The remaining letters spell out something you will hear a lot of in court.

- | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|
| Book | Lie | TV |
| Clerk | Secret | Usher |
| Dock | Toy | Video |
| Law | Trial | Visit |
| Lawyer | Truth | Witness |

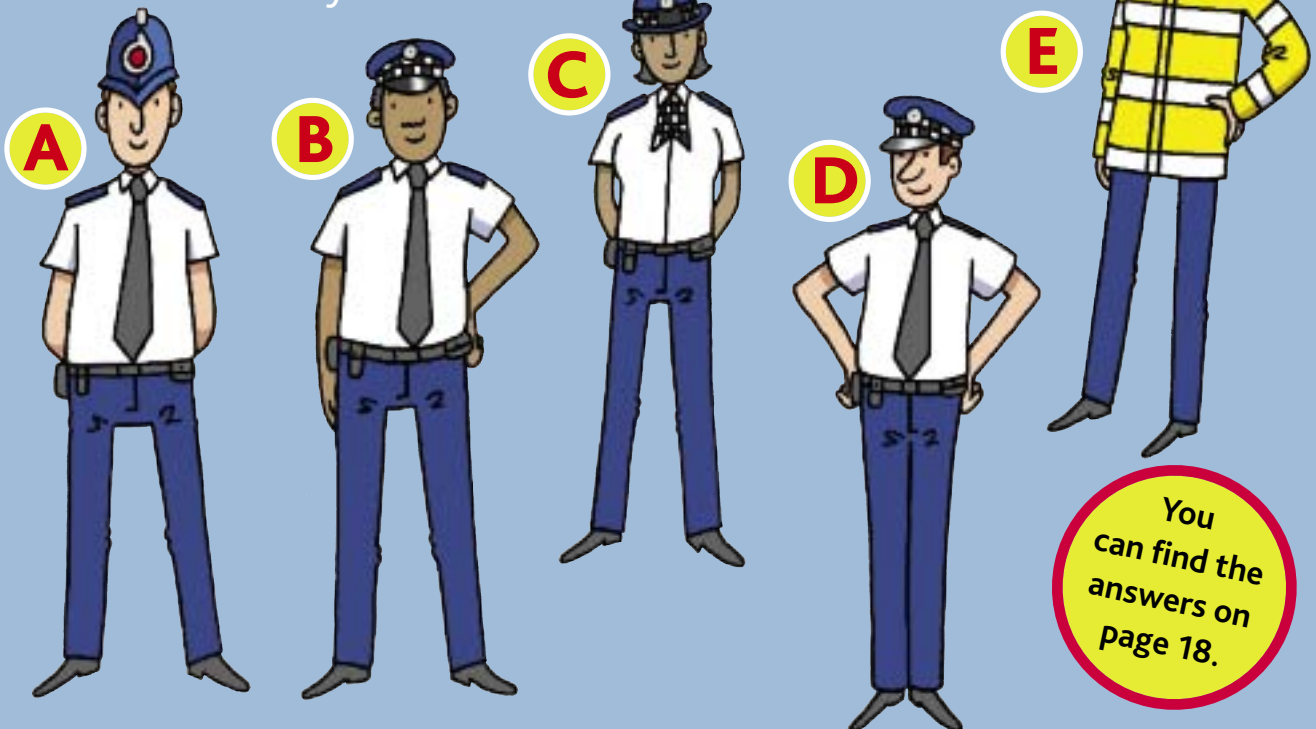
The hidden word is:

.....



Police line-up

Which two of these police officers are dressed exactly the same?



You can find the answers on page 18.

Looking around the court

Before you go to court as a witness, it's a good idea to visit the court first. You can go with someone you know.

You can look around an empty courtroom and the waiting room and ask questions. You can also try out the TV link.



Why not pretend to be a judge or a lawyer?

Are you worried about being a witness?

If you are worried about what happens at court, tell the person who asked you to go to court. There are things that might help you. These are called 'special measures'.

Special measures are things that might help you to give evidence. If the judge agrees, you can give your evidence by

..... talking to the court by TV link. If you
..... want to go into the courtroom to
..... answer questions, you can ask for
..... screens so that you don't have to look
..... at the defendant (the person who
..... might have broken the law). If you
..... have a screen, the defendant cannot
..... see you.

In the waiting room

When you go to court, someone you know will be with you. This might be someone from your family, or a supporter.

You may have to wait for a while before it is your turn to answer questions. So it's a good idea to take something to eat and drink.

While you are waiting, the prosecutor and the defence lawyer may come and meet you. (Remember who they are? They're on pages 4 and 5!)

When it is your turn, the usher will come and collect you.



Take some toys, books or a game so you don't get bored.

Take a jumper or sweatshirt, too, in case it's cold.

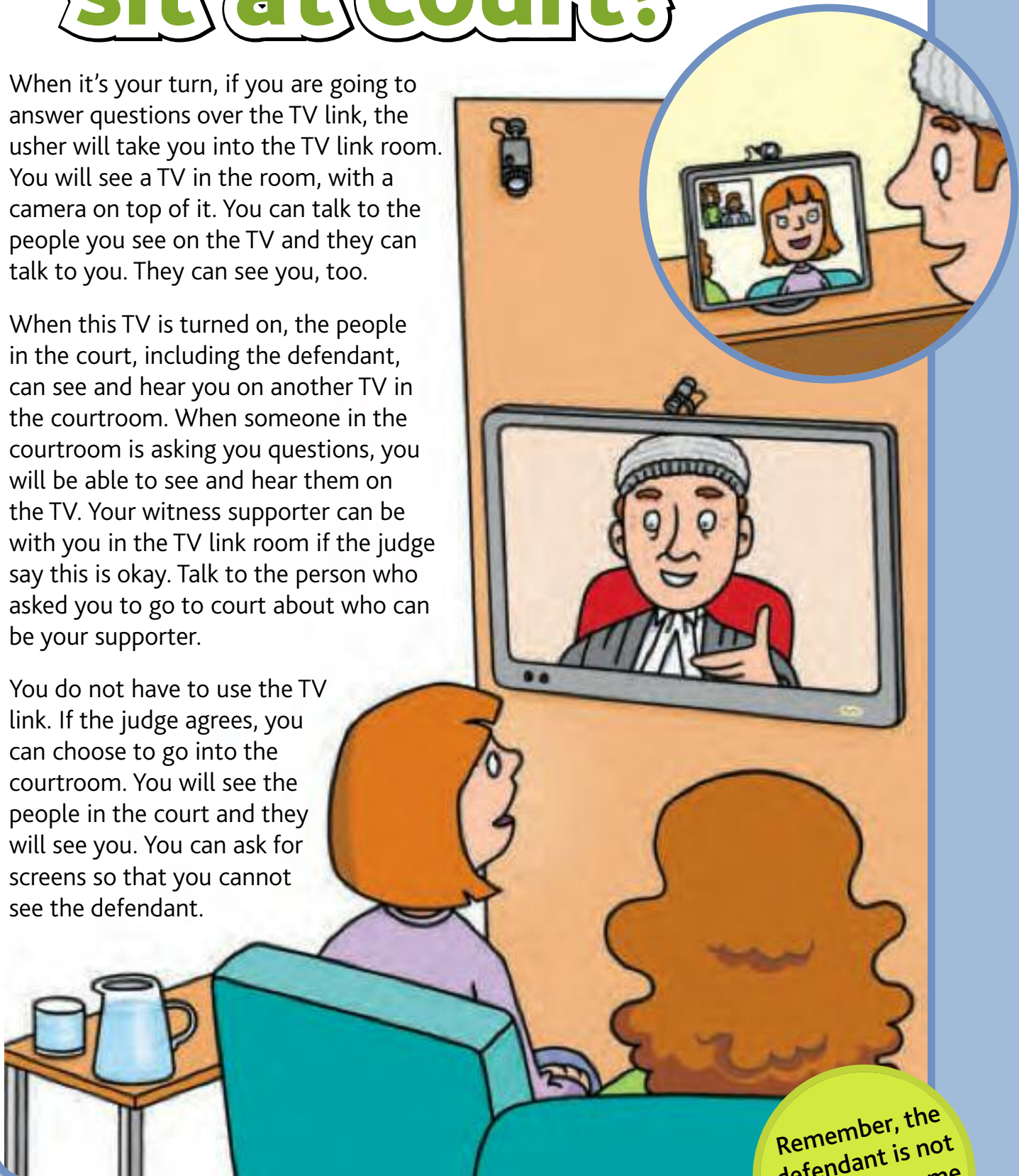
Which toy or book would you like to have with you while you wait?

Where will you sit at court?

When it's your turn, if you are going to answer questions over the TV link, the usher will take you into the TV link room. You will see a TV in the room, with a camera on top of it. You can talk to the people you see on the TV and they can talk to you. They can see you, too.

When this TV is turned on, the people in the court, including the defendant, can see and hear you on another TV in the courtroom. When someone in the courtroom is asking you questions, you will be able to see and hear them on the TV. Your witness supporter can be with you in the TV link room if the judge say this is okay. Talk to the person who asked you to go to court about who can be your supporter.

You do not have to use the TV link. If the judge agrees, you can choose to go into the courtroom. You will see the people in the court and they will see you. You can ask for screens so that you cannot see the defendant.



Remember, the defendant is not allowed to come near you.

Can I get some help?



Yes! There are lots of ways the people in the court can help you.

You can ask the judge for help at any time – for instance, if there's something you don't understand or that's making you feel bad. Even if you are in the TV link room, the judge can always see and hear you when the TV is turned on.

If you want to ask a question or you don't understand something, just say or put your hand up. Perhaps you'll need to ask for:

A drink of water

A break to go to the toilet

A little rest

A tissue

If you think you have made a mistake, or if there is something you think you have left out while answering a question, tell the judge. Everything you say helps the judge, so don't be scared to say...

Excuse me!



What happens after I've been to court?

A trial is like a jigsaw puzzle. Each witness gives a piece of the puzzle and the jury tries to put the puzzle together. It can take a long time.

If you want to know what the judge and jury decided in the end, the person who gave you this booklet will tell you. If you want to talk about what happened at the court, ask a grown-up who knows you and knows about your day at court.



Not Guilty

If the jury is sure the defendant did not break the law, the jury will say the defendant is not guilty.

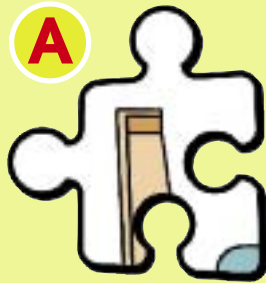
Perhaps the jury felt that a piece of the jigsaw was missing, and that they couldn't see the whole picture. The jury will then say the defendant is "not guilty", because it's wrong to punish someone unless it is absolutely clear he or she is guilty.



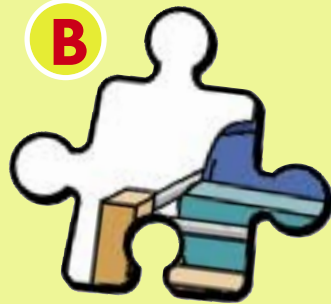
Puzzle pieces

Which jigsaw piece completes the big courtroom picture?

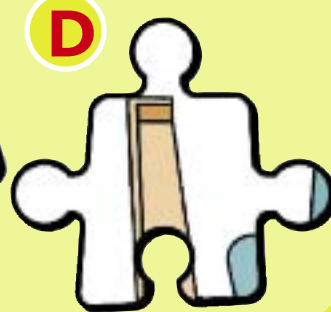
A



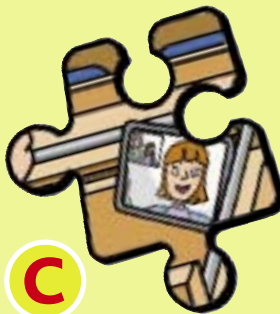
B



D



C



Figured it out? You can check on page 18!

Whatever happens at court, it is important to remember that you have not done anything wrong. By being a witness, you have been very brave, and really helped the people in the court.

Guilty

If the people in the jury are sure that the defendant did something wrong, then they will say that the defendant is guilty. The jury will decide how to punish the defendant for breaking the law.

Thank you!

After you have talked to the court, you can go home. Well done! Thank you for being a witness. You have done a very important job.

Jaz, Harry, Sam and Alix have all been to court today. And they all left their bags behind! Can you use the clues to work out which bag is whose?



1 Jaz always likes to be well prepared and today she's made sure she won't go hungry.

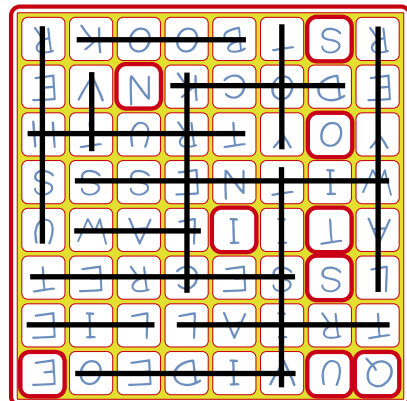
2 Harry didn't fancy waiting for the bus this morning, so he brought his own wheels.

3 Sam battled space aliens on the same day he came to court. How did he manage that?!

4 Alix has a friend who goes everywhere with her – they even dress the same!

Answers

Page 9 Court out! Path C.
Page 11 Wordsearch (see left) The hidden word is "Questions". Police line-up Police officers B and D are dressed the same.
Page 17 Puzzle pieces Piece D.
Page 18 Sam – B, Jaz – D, Alix – C and Harry – A.



Your turn to ask questions

Write down any questions you have about being a witness. Ask a grown up to help you if you like. It's the job of the person who gave you this booklet to answer all your questions. So ask away!

QUESTIONS

ANSWERS

What does a courtroom look like?	
Shall I visit the court?	
What toy shall I take to court?	

Useful contacts

Childline

Telephone: **0800 1111**
www.childline.org.uk

Operates a free, 24-hour helpline for children who need counselling, advice or help with any kind of problem.

Children's Legal Centre

University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
Essex CO4 3SQ
Telephone: **0808 802 0008**
Email: **clc@essex.ac.uk**
www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Offers advice by telephone, letter or email on matters of law and policy affecting children in England and Wales.

VOICE UK

Room 100 - 106
Kelvin House
RTC Business Centre
London Rd
Derby DE2Y 8UP
Telephone: **0808 802 8686**
Email: **voice@voiceuk.org.uk**
www.voiceuk.org.uk

Provides advice and support for people with learning disabilities who go to court, and for their families and carers. Produces publications designed to support witnesses with learning disabilities.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Can put you in touch with useful local and national organisations. Look in your phone book for the address of your nearest branch.

NSPCC

Weston House
42 Curtain Road
London EC2A 3NH
Telephone: **0808 800 5000**

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has local projects supporting child witnesses in some areas of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

To find out if there is a project in your area, contact your nearest divisional NSPCC office:

Belfast **02890 351135**
Cardiff **029 2026 7000**
Leeds **0113 229 2200**
Leicester **0116 276 9999**
London **020 7825 2500**
Taunton **01823 346350**

The NSPCC also operates the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline, a free, 24-hour service which provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse. The Helpline can also respond to child witness enquiries.

Telephone: **0808 800 5000**
Textphone: **0800 056 0566**

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