

WAYMARK 2: ORGANIZE

No matter how uncomfortable you feel as you survey the pile of materials now before you, resist the urge to run screaming from the room. Sooner or later you're going to have to get up close and personal with your case, and organizing what you have collected relating to it is where this starts. It is normal to feel anxious and overwhelmed by unfamiliar documents, all the stuff you have collected (like print-outs of email messages or Facebook pages you don't know if you should or even could use as evidence to support your case) and sometimes, officious letters from the other party's lawyer. Trying to make sense out of all these things may seem like an impossible task when you first begin rifling through them, but putting everything into its right place will begin to lessen the stress inevitably associated with the legal process.



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SETTING YOUR SAILS

I imagine that in some important ways, launching into a legal proceeding without understanding the process would be much like heading across the Strait of Georgia not knowing how a sailboat works.

For several years, I lived in Vancouver, British Columbia with my young son Michael. After growing up in the Far North, Mike was not happy with the big city and, like me, longed for something less congested. As a compromise, I decided that living aboard a sailboat would be better than the leaky condo I thought I could afford and purchased a 33.5' yacht named *Haley*, which we moored in Coal Harbour.

I remember walking around my new boat, admiring its sleek lines and towering mast, knowing it could take us places, but without a clue about how to make that happen. Ropes everywhere, winches, switches and names for everything in a language I did not then speak (e.g., our “front door” was now the “companionway.”) I was baffled. Being just 10, Mike went off to sailing school and quickly learned all about it with kids his own age. For me, it was not so easy. But I signed up for Power Squadron and eventually, with the help of an on-board instructor, learned to sail.

The ocean, like the justice system, is there for us all to use, but you have to know how. I have now sailed the Strait five times, but without first learning how *Haley* worked, I would have had real difficulty making it across. I am not a great sailor. I still let the sails “luff” (as my son likes to point out – to which I always reply “So what!?”) but I have learned to make my way.

You will too.