



# Look Both Ways Before Signing

Read the fine print  
now and protect  
yourself from  
problems down  
the line.

By Liz Barrett

Everyone has signed a contract—whether for a new car, house or even a cell phone. Consumers and business owners are faced with fine print on a regular basis. The question is, how much of a contract's fine print are you really reading, and are you ready to face the consequences if and when that contract abruptly comes to an end?

## *Read Everything*

We've all heard the line "This is just standard legal stuff." Whether or not you believe it, you might find yourself pleading your case in front of the judge if you sign on the dotted line before carefully reviewing all of the terms of a contract. And the reality is, a judge won't care, according to Champaign, Illinois-based attorney Michael L. Antoline. Pleading that you didn't know or that the contract drafter told you it was a standard contract won't hold up as a defense. "It will be inadmissible," says Antoline. "The judge won't listen because you're supposed to be a savvy businessperson who knows to read every line of a contract."