

The most important and widely used legal terms

Accuse: To claim someone did something, often something illegal. *(verb)*

Accused: A person that is alleged to have done something. *(noun)*

Acquit: To say a person is not guilty and did not perform a crime. *(verb)*

Advocate: A lawyer who argues for a particular side of a case in court. *(noun)*

Allege: To say that someone might have done something, but it has not been proven to be true. *(verb)*

Appeal: To try to reverse the judgment of a court. *(verb)*

Appeal-court: A special court where appeals are heard. *(noun)*

Arrest: When a police officer takes away someone who has committed a crime. *(noun)*

Arson: To illegally set fire to something. *(noun)*

Assault: To physically attack another person. *(verb)*

Bailiff: A court worker who enforces the judge's orders. *(noun)*

Ban: To prevent someone from doing something for a certain amount of time. *(noun)*

Barrister: A senior lawyer that works in higher or more important courts. *(noun)*

Bench (1): Where the judge sits in a court. *(noun)*

Bench (2): A collective name for all the judges within a court. *(noun)*

Break-the-law: To do something that is not allowed under the law of that country. *(verb)*

Bribery: To give something (normally money) to get an advantage. *(noun)*

Burglary: To steal something from within a building or vehicle. *(noun)*

Capital punishment: The use of the death penalty for some crimes. *(noun)*

Case: A single item happening within a court. *(noun)*

Charge: To officially claim that a person broke the law. *(verb)*

Civil law: The rules related to the running of a country or state. *(noun)*

Commit a crime: To do something illegal. *(verb)*

Compensate: To give something (often money) to offset criminal damage. *(verb)*

Convict: To state that someone is guilty of a crime. *(noun)*

Court clerk: The person who ensures a court runs smoothly, the person who keeps the court records. *(noun)*

Courtroom: The place where cases are heard by a judge. *(noun)*

Criminal law: The rules related to crime and the punishment of crimes. (*noun*)

Criminal: A person who has been convicted by a court. (*noun*)

Death penalty: To kill someone as a form of punishment for committing a crime. (*noun*)

Defence attorney: A lawyer who explains why a person did not do the crime or why they are innocent. (*noun*)

Defence: The argument as to why someone is innocent. (*noun*)

Defendant: The person who has been accused of committing a crime. (*noun*)

Dock: The place where the defendant sits during the trial. (*noun*)

Drink-driving: The crime of driving a vehicle after drinking alcohol. (*noun*)

Drug dealing: The crime of selling illegal drugs. (*noun*)

Embezzlement: The crime of stealing money owned by someone else but which you were in charge of. (*noun*)

Evidence: The material and information that is used in a court case to show innocence or guilt. (*noun*)

Expert witness: Someone who knows a lot about a topic and is called to give evidence. (*noun*)

Felony: A serious crime (American English). (*noun*)

Fine: To be required to give away money as a punishment for committing a crime. (*noun*)

Foreperson: The leader of a jury and the person who speaks for them. (*noun*)

Forgery: The crime of making something and claiming it is something else. (*noun*)

Fraud: The crime of using false information to get something. (*noun*)

Guilty: To be found to have committed a crime. (*adjective*)

High-court: The most important court in a country (British English). (*noun*)

Hijack: The crime of taking a vehicle with people in it and forcing it to go somewhere. (*noun*)

Homicide: The crime of intentionally killing someone (same as murder) (American English). (*noun*)

Illegal: Something that is not allowed by the laws of a country. (*adjective*)

Imprison: To put someone in prison as a punishment for committing a crime. (*verb*)

Indict: To officially accuse someone of committing a crime. (*verb*)

Innocent: To be proven to be not guilty, to have not committed the crime. (*adjective*)

Judge: The person who decides what sentence to give to someone

found guilty of committing a crime. *(noun)*

Jury: A group of 12 people who listen to the evidence in a case and then decide if the accused is guilty. *(noun)*

Jury room: The room where the jury goes to consider the evidence and decide a verdict. *(noun)*

Justice: A situation where a guilty person has been punished. *(noun)*

Juvenile: A person who is not an adult and is often dealt with in special courts. *(noun)*

Kidnapping: The crime of taking a person away and demanding money to return them. *(noun)*

Law: The rule or rules that govern how people should behave. *(noun)*

Lawsuit: A court case brought by an individual person rather than officials. *(noun)*

Lawyer: A person who studies and practices law. *(noun)*

Legal: Related to and governed by the law. *(adjective)*

Magistrate: A judge with lower qualifications who deals with minor offences. *(noun)*

Manslaughter: The crime of accidentally killing someone. *(noun)*

Misdemeanour: A less serious crime (American English). *(noun)*

Murder: The crime of intentionally killing someone (same as homicide) (British English). *(noun)*

Negligence: To act without proper care for the consequences. *(noun)*

Not-guilty: To have not committed a crime. *(adjective)*

Offence: The specific law that a person has broken. *(noun)*

Parole: To be released from prison early but with restrictions on the person's actions. *(noun)*

Perjury: The crime of lying while promising not to lie. *(noun)*

Pick-pocketing: The crime of stealing something from a person's pocket or bag. *(noun)*

Plaintiff: The person who starts an action in a court. *(noun)*

Plea: The response to whether a person did or did not commit a crime: guilty or innocent. *(noun)*

Police officer: A person who catches criminals and stops crimes being committed. *(noun)*

Precedent: Where previous judgments are used as the base of new laws. *(noun)*

Prison sentence: The time that a criminal has to spend in prison. *(noun)*

Prison: A place where criminals are sent and locked up as a punishment for their crimes. *(noun)*

Probation: A period of time where a criminal's behaviour is looked at closely and if they do anything wrong they can go back to prison. *(noun)*

Prosecution: The lawyers who are trying to prove a person is guilty. *(noun)*

Public gallery: The area in a court room where people can sit and watch. *(noun)*

Robbery: The crime of taking something that does not belong to you. *(noun)*

Shoplifting: The crime of taking something from a shop without paying. *(noun)*

Smuggling: The crime of bringing something into a country that is illegal or not paying taxes related to the items. *(noun)*

Solicitor: A lawyer who can be consulted for advice and who prepares documents. *(noun)*

Stand trial: To be prosecuted in front of a jury. *(noun)*

Statement: A formal description of what happened or was observed. *(noun)*

Stenographer: The person who records every word spoken in a court. *(noun)*

Sue: To start a legal claim against a person or entity. *(verb)*

Suspect: A person who is believed to have committed a crime. *(noun)*

Take the stand: To go to the front of the court room (the stand) and give evidence. *(verb)*

Terrorism: The crime of using violence against people to achieve a specific goal. *(noun)*

Testify: To give evidence in a court. *(verb)*

The accused: The person who is standing trial for committing a crime. *(noun)*

The stand: The place at the front of the court room where witnesses stand to give evidence. *(noun)*

Theft: The crime of taking something that is not yours. *(noun)*

Trespass: The crime of entering an area or building without permission. *(noun)*

Trial: The process of a jury listening to evidence and then giving a verdict. *(noun)*

Unanimous: When everyone agrees with the same answer. *(adjective)*

Vandalism: The crime of damaging property. *(noun)*

Verdict: The final decision reached by a jury, normally 'guilty' or 'not guilty'. *(noun)*

Victim: The person who has had a crime committed against them and who has suffered. *(noun)*

Violate: To not follow rules that are specifically set. *(verb)*

Witness: A person who has information about a crime. *(noun)*

