

ABBREVIATED LEGAL WORD DEFINITIONS

Abandonment	To leave, desert, give up entirely
Abate	To quash, defeat, diminish, subside
Accusation	A charge of crime or misconduct; indictment
Acquittal	Formal act of freeing/clearing of accusation
Ad Litem	Attorney appointed to represent party incapacitated, infancy, or otherwise
Adjudication	Judicial decision, sentence
Administrator	A person legally vested with right of administration of an estate
Admissibility	Capable of being allowed/conceded
Admonitory Instructions	Warning against fault or oversight
Affidavit	Sworn statement
Amended Instrument	Make deletions, or additions, or corrections to original document
Amendment	An alteration proposed or effected by this process
Answer	Defense in writing to allegations made against him
Appeal	Proceeding where case is brought from lower to higher court for rehearing
Appearance	Party or Attorney in court
Argument	Reason given in proof or rebuttal

Arraignment	Defendant appears before judge who reads indictment, defendant pleads guilty/not-guilty
Arrest	Taking of person in custody to answer for crime
Bail	Security given by accused to assure appearance to accusation against him
Bailiff	Officer who keeps order in courtroom
Bail Bond	Arranged through bail bondsman when accused does not have funds for bail/when court does not personal bond
Bench	Seat where Judge sits in court
Bifurcated Trial	Two part trial: Evidence on guilt or innocence and if found guilty; separate hearing for sentencing
Bond	Obligation made binding by money forfeit
Burden of Proof	Duty to prove a disputed assertion or charge
Capias	Process on indictment when person is not in custody; writs of attachment or arrest
Certiorari	Writ of superior court to inferior court for records
Challenge	Exception taken to juror before juror is sworn
Charge	Accusation in legal form; reason for arrest; initial step in prosecution for a crime
Charge of the Court	Final address of Judge to jury before verdict, summing up case, instructs jury on rules of law which apply to issues of case they must observe

Child Support	Money paid through the Attorney's General's or the District Clerk's Office for care of dependent children
Citation	An official notice to appear in court
Citation by Publication	Citation served by publishing in newspaper
Civil Procedure	Steps to civil actions
Claimant	One that asserts a right or title
Class Action	Legal action undertaken by one or more plaintiffs in an alleged wrong doing
Closing Statement	Summary of facts and issues
Commissioners	Person given authority in a judicial and/or administrative way
Complaint	Statement of grievance/injury in a civil suit
Conclusions of Law	Conclusion reached through the application of rules of law
Conservatorship	Appointment of person, to take over and protect the interests of an incompetent
Contempt	Disobedience to or open disrespect of Court
Continuance	Adjournment of court proceedings to a future day
Controversy	Public dispute requiring settlement in a court of law
Conviction	Adjudication of a person guilty of an offense
Count	Criminal procedure a separate charge, as in indictment

Court	Body of government whose function is the application of the laws to cases brought before it and administration of justice
Counter Claim	An opposing claim in a law suit
Credibility	Offering reasonable grounds for being believed
Criminal Justice System	Enforcement standards of conduct necessary to protect individuals and the community
Criminal Law	Law relating to claims
Cross Claim	An opposing claim in a law suit
Cross Examination	Series of questions to check or discredit answer of previous questions
Decree	Order having the force of the law
Default	Failure to do something required by duty or law
Default Judgment	Judgment granted to party due to other party not answering charges brought by the Plaintiff
Defendant	Person required to answer a legal action or suit
Defendant (Rights of)	Constitution guarantees that no one can be deprived of his life, liberty or property without due process of law and trial by jury of peers
Deferred Adjudication	Placing person on probation without finding of guilt after plea or guilty or no contest of charge
Delivery Bond	Personal property taken in execution to obtain a bond
Deposition	Testimony taken down in writing under oath

Descent and Distribution	Assets minus the liabilities are distributed among surviving relatives according to the law
Detention	Act of holding person or thing; restraint; custody
Discharge	Legal release from custody
Discovery	Procedure where party gains information concerning case held by adverse party
Discretionary	Exercise of power or right to act in official capacity
Discretionary Review	Review held by Criminal Court of Appeals of decision of Court of Appeals in criminal case
Dismissal	Fact or state of being dismissed, out of judicial consideration
Dismissal for Want of Prosecution	Dismissal of case due to lapse of activity in case
Disposition	Settlement, ruling, verdict
Disqualification	Deprive of power, right or privilege
Distress Warrant	Writ authorizing officer to take as pledge property of another to keep until he performs his obligation or until property is replevied
Docket	List of cases set for court at a specified time
Docket sheet	Paper where record is entered of court proceedings
Enforce	Compel, carry out effectively
Equal Protection of the Laws	Doctrine stated in Constitution of United States all persons are entitled to protection afforded by law on equal basis

Evidence	Where an alleged matter of fact, submitted to investigation at judicial trial, is established or disproved
Examination	A formal interrogation
Examining Trial	Trial, after complaint filed to inquire into accusation and to set bond or release person if insufficient evidence is presented
Exclusionary Rule	Exclusion from trial of any evidence that was illegally obtained
Execution	Putting to death as a legal penalty, a judicial writ
Executor	Person appointed by a testator to execute his will
Exhibits	Documents or material objects produced and identified in court or before an examiner to use as evidence
Ex Parte	Done for, on behalf of, or on the application of, one party only
Expedite	To execute promptly; to accelerate the process or progress of
Expunge	To strike out obliterate or mark for deletion; destroy a crime record
False Imprisonment or Arrest	Is the willful detention by one, of another, against the latter's consent and without authority of law
Felony	Offense that may be punishable by probation; confinement in jail or penitentiary
Fiat	Paragraph at the end of motion submitted to court with blank spaces to be filled in with day and time of setting

Finding of Fact	In judicial administrative proceeding, person or group of persons has responsibility of determining facts relevant to decide controversy
Foreclosure	Proceeding that bars or extinguishes a mortgagors right of redeeming mortgaged estate
Forfeited	To ease right to by some error, offense or crime
Forfeiture of Bond	Failure to perform the condition upon which obligor was to be excused from the penalty in the bond
Garnishment	A stoppage of a specified sum from wages to satisfy a creditor
Grand Jury	Consists of 12 persons who are chosen from 20 from different parts of county. If defendant held for trial, GJ brings in true bill, if to be released GJ brings in no bill
Grand Jury Commissioners	Five persons chosen by District Judge to select 20 persons as panel from which 12 Grand Jurors are chosen
Grievance	Cause of distress felt to afford reason for complaint or resistance
Guardian Ad Litem	Chosen to take care of someone who is unable to care for themself
Guardian	One who has the care of person or property of another
Habeas Corpus	Writ addressed to one who has person in custody, commanding him to produce their person
Hearsay	Something heard from another
Impanel	Summon jurors to appear in court on certain day to form jury

Inability to Pay	Lack of sufficient resources
In Camera	In private chambers, secrecy
Indictment	Accusation in writing, presented by grand jury to competent court, charging person with crime
Information	Accusation in writing, presented by prosecutor to competent court, charging person with crime
Injunction	Prohibitive writ issued by court to party of suit, forbidding that party to do some act, which he is threatening or attempting to commit
Inquest	Judicial inquiry aided by jury, into special matter, such as suspicious death
Instanter	At once
Instrument	Formal legal document
Interpleader	Proceeding to enable person to compel parties making claims against him to litigate matter between themselves
Interpret	Present in understandable terms
Interpreter	One who interprets between speakers of different languages
Interrogatories	Written questions required to be answered under direction of the court Intervenor One who intervenes as third party in legal proceeding
Joinder	Parties joining as plaintiffs or defendants in suit joining of causes of action or defense

Judgment	Formal decision given by court
Judgment Nisi	Judgment against principle and sureties on a bond in a criminal case when principle (defendant) fails to appear in court and bond is forfeited
Jurisdiction	Limits/territory within which authority may be exercised
Jury or Petit Jury	Persons to hear/determine the facts of case; composed of 12 members in District Court and 6 in County Court
Jury Misconduct	Conduct not allowed by court; as discussing case while it is ongoing
Jury Panel	List of jurors sent to court to attend court as jury members
Jury Poll	Poll of jury on verdict
Jury Trial	Sixth amendment to the constitution provides that in all criminal prosecutions, accused shall have a right to speedy/public trial by an impartial jury. The seventh amendment applies to civil rights
Levy	To seize property
Magistrate	Judicial officer having the power to issue warrant for arrest of person charged with crime
Mandamus	Writ of superior court commanding performance of specified official act or duty
Mandate	Authoritative command - formal order from superior court or official to an inferior one
Merits	Intrinsic rights and wrongs of legal case as determined by substance rather than form, legal significance, standing of importance

Misdemeanor	Offense which only requires fine and/or jail time in city or county jail
Misnomer	Misnaming of person in legal instrument
Mistrial	Trial of action that is declared void because of error; also trial in which jury cannot agree on verdict
Modification	Making change in prior court order
Motion	Appreciation made to court or Judge to obtain order, ruling, direction
Movant	Plaintiff or person filing case
New Trial	Re-trial granted by the court based on new evidence or jury misconduct
Nihil Dicit	Judgment which may be taken against a defendant who omits to plead or answer the plaintiffs declaration or complaint
Nolo Contendere	Do not contest a charge
Nolle Prosequi	Will not further prosecute; dismiss
Non-Jury	Trial or hearing before the court not a jury
Nonsuit	Plaintiff decides not to continue lawsuit and requests that case be dismissed
Not Guilty	Plea of denial in a criminal prosecution
Notice	Notification by one of the parties to agreement or relation of intention of terminating at specified time
Nunc Pro Tunc	Order correcting errors made in prior order

Oath	Solemn attestation of the truth or inviolability of ones words
Objection	Reason or argument presented in opposition
Omissions	Something neglected or left out
Opening Statement	Remarks made by both parties to a suit pointing out their issues and facts
Opinion	Belief; view; judgment. Formal expression by court giving reasons for decisions
Order	Issues and agreements based on a court hearing for the Judge to sign
Overrule	To Rule against, to set aside
Parole	Conditional release, under supervision, of convicted person who served part of sentence in prison
Partition	Divide into parts or shares
Pauper's Affidavit	Sworn statement of income and expenses for purpose of establishing ones inability to pay costs of court
Perjury	Voluntary violation of oath or vow by swearing to what is untrue or by omission to what has been promised under oath
Petit Jury	Jury of 12 persons impaneled to reach verdict based upon facts and issues in cases for trial
Petition	Document embodying formal written request
Plaintiff	One who commences personal action or lawsuit to obtain a remedy for injury to his rights; the complaining party in litigation

Plea	Allegation made by party in support of cause; something offered by way of excuse or justification
Plea Bargaining	Procedure by which defendant charged with offense agrees to plead guilty in return for sentence lesser than maximum provided by law
Pleadings	Formal written allegations and counter allegations made alternately by parties in legal action
Precedent	Prior in time, order, arrangement or significance
Pre-Trial	Hearing held on preliminary trial matters
Pro Se	Person representing himself in lawsuit
Probate	Action or process of proving before a competent judicial authority that a document offered for official recognition and registration as last will and testament of deceased person is genuine
Probate Court	Court that has jurisdiction over Probate of wills
Probation	Method allowing convicted person to go at large under suspension of sentence, but usually under the supervision of probation officer
Production of Documents	Request served on party by another party, permitting party to inspect, test, photograph and/or copy documents (which constitute or contain matters that are possession of party to whom request was made)
Prosecuting Attorney	Attorney empowered to act on behalf of government, whether state, county or national

Protective Order	Order granted by Judge for protection; law enforcement to enforce
Quash	To make void; to vacate; to overthrow
Receiver	Person appointed to hold in trust and administer property under litigation
Reciprocal	Collecting or assisting in collection of child support for another state
Recusal	Withdrawal from a case by a Judge
Relevant	Having significant and demonstrable bearing upon matter at hand
Remand	Formally send back, remand a prisoner to jail or a case from higher to lower court
Repleader	Second legal proceeding; right of pleading again granted when issue is immaterial or insufficient
Replevy	To take or get back by a writ for replevin (from whom something was taken without permission)
Requisition	Act of searching or calling upon someone to perform an action
Respondent	Party who makes an answer to petition
Sanctions	Detriment loss of reward or coercive intervention annexed to violation of law as means of enforcing society's standards
Scire Facias	Judicial Writ founded upon some matter of record requiring party proceeding against to show cause why record should not be enforced, annulled or vacated

Search, Illegal	Fourth Amendment protects citizens from "unreasonable searches, seizures
Search Warrant	Order, signed by magistrate, directed to peace officer, commanding him to search property or person for specific evidence
Seizure	Taking possession of person or property by legal process
Sequestration	Act of seizing or taking possession of property belonging to another, and holding it
Sentence	Punishment imposed, final judgment, penalty pronounced to person convicted
Service	Exhibition or delivery of writ, notice, etc., by an authorized person, to one who is thereby notified of some action or proceeding in which he is concerned, and advised of action he must take
Special Exceptions	Objection to form in which cause of action is stated
Special Issues	One or more material points upon which whole case is determined
Speedy Trial	Trial free from unreasonable delay
Statutes	Law enacted by the legislative branch of government
Stay of Execution	Stopping or suspension of procedure or execution by judicial or executive order
Subpoena	Writ commanding person designated in court to appear in court under a penalty or failure
Suit	Action or process in a court for the recovery of right or claim

Summary Judgment	Short application to a court or judge without formality of full proceeding
Supersede	Take the place, room, position of
Supersedeas	Common-law writ commanding stay of legal proceedings issued under various conditions to stay an officer from proceeding under another writ
Supplemental Answer	One which was filed for the purpose of correcting, adding and explaining an answer filed
Supplemental Petition	One consisting of facts arising since filing of original
Surety	One who became legally liable for debt, default, or failure in duty of another
Surety Bond	Bond guaranteeing performance of contract or obligation
Sustain	Allow or admit as valid
Temporary Injunction	Injunction which is to last for limited time only
Temporary Restraining Order	Order to enforce protection until hearing held on temporary orders
Testify	Make a statement based on personal knowledge or belief
Third Party	Party other than principals to court proceeding
Tort	Private or civil wrong, by act or omission, for which civil suit can be brought
Transcripts	Written, printed or typed copy of dictate or recorded material

Transfer Venue	Removal of cause from jurisdiction of one court or judge to another by lawful authority
Trial	Formal examination before a competent tribunal of the matter in issue in civil or criminal cases in order to determine such issue
Trial Amendment	Pleading that litigant files during progress of actual trial of case, which is to meet some situation that is developed by evidence
Trial by Jury	Trial in which issues of fact are to be determined by the verdict of jury rather than by the court/judge
Trial De Novo	New trial or retrial in appellate court in which the whole case is tried as if no trial had been held in the court below
Trial on Merits	Trial which depends on inherent justice of the contention
Venire	Name of writ used to summon a jury
Venue	Place at which an action is tried; place or neighborhood where crime is committed, or where cause of action arises
Verdict	Opinion, judgment; the finding or decision of a jury on the matter submitted to them in trial
Voir Dire	Speak the truth, phrase commonly means the preliminary examination of jurors
Waiver	Act of intentionally relinquishing or abandoning known right, claim, or privilege

Warrant	A percept or writ issued by competent magistrate authorizing officer to make arrest, seizure or search or do other acts incident to the administration of justice
Will	Legal declaration of a persons mind as to manner in which he would have his property or estate disposed of after his death
Withdrawal of Counsel	To request to no longer represent a party
Withdrawal of Plea	Court may, in its discretion, at any time before judgment upon plea of guilty, permit such plea to be withdrawn and a plea of not guilty to be substituted
Witness	One that give evidence, one who testifies in a cause or before a judicial tribunal
Workmans Compensation	Pay to employee for an injury that occurred in the scope and course of his employment
Writ	An order or mandatory process in writing issued under seal in the name of a court or judicial officer commanding the person to whom it is directed to perform or refrain from performing act specified therein