

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Courts and the Legal Process

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe the two different court systems in the United States, and explain why some cases can be filed in either court system.
- Explain the importance of subject matter jurisdiction and personal jurisdiction and know the difference between the two.
- Describe the various stages of a civil action: from pleadings, to discovery, to trial, and to appeals.
- Describe two alternatives to litigation: mediation and arbitration.

In the United States, law and government are interdependent. The Constitution establishes the basic framework of government and imposes certain limitations on the powers of government. In turn, the various branches of government are intimately involved in making, enforcing, and interpreting the law. Today, much of the law comes from Congress and the state legislatures. But it is in the courts that legislation is interpreted and prior case law is interpreted and applied.

[3.1: Introduction to the Courts and the Legal Process](#)

[3.2: The Relationship between State and Federal Court Systems in the United States](#)

[3.3: The Problem of Jurisdiction](#)

[3.4: Motions and Discovery](#)

[3.5: The Pretrial and Trial Phase](#)

[3.6: Judgment, Appeal, and Execution](#)

[3.7: When Can Someone Bring a Lawsuit?](#)

[3.8: Relations with Lawyers](#)

[3.9: Alternative Means of Resolving Disputes](#)

[3.10: Cases](#)

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