



Judges in the Federal Court System

- Supreme Court of the U.S.
- U.S. Circuit Courts
- U.S. District Courts

This is a teaching tool that simplifies key points for students. Find more information at uscourts.gov educational resources

1 Supreme Court of the United States



Justices are

Supreme Court Justices

- 1 Chief Justice of the United States Considered An Equal Among Equals
- 8 Associate Justices

13 U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeals

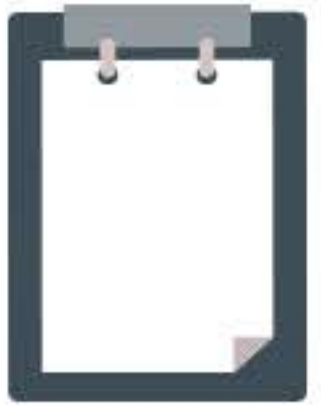


Judges are

Appellate Court Judges

- 3 Number of Judges Typically on an Appellate Court Panel
- >3 En Banc Panel: All Appellate Judges in a Circuit

94 U.S. District Courts



Judges are

District/Trial Court Judges

- U.S. District Court Judges
- U.S. Magistrate Judges
- U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judges

U.S. District Court Judges

President Nominates
Senate Confirms



Hear Criminal and Civil Cases

Lifetime Tenure



U.S. Magistrate Judges

Each District Court Appoints



Handle Pre-Trial Matters & Some Trials

Renewable 8-Year Term



U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judges

Each Circuit Court of Appeals Appoints



Hear Only Bankruptcy Cases

Renewable 14-Year Term



Contact the national educational outreach manager for the federal courts Rebecca Fanning at rebecca_fanning@ao.uscourts.gov

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What is the Job of Federal Judges?

This is a teaching tool that simplifies key points for students. Find courtroom-ready and classroom-ready resources and activities in the educational resources section at uscourts.gov

Settle Cases

Try Cases



Ensure the Process is Fair

Make and Write Decisions



Article III of the U.S. Constitution establishes the Three Branches of Government. The Third Branch is the Judiciary.

Justices on the U.S. Supreme Court



Consider ~7,000 appeals per year and select ~100 cases for oral arguments

Hear ~100 oral arguments every year

Write opinions

ROLE

The ultimate interpreter of the Constitution

Judges on U.S. Courts of Appeals



Hear appeals in panels of 3 or more appellate judges in each Circuit

Review the record of the trial court below for errors in procedures and/or application of laws

Examine the trial transcripts

No witness testimony; no new evidence

ROLE

The error-correcting court for the trial courts. Last stop for all but ~ 100 cases taken by the Supreme Court.

Judges on U.S. District Courts



U.S. District Court Judges

Settle or try criminal & civil cases from 1st appearance through sentencing

U.S. Magistrate Judges

Hear cases authorized by law and/or assigned by District Court Judges

U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judges

Handle matters related to individual and corporate debtors and creditors

ROLE

The court where cases start -- either settled or tried
Witnesses testify -- Evidence is presented
The Judge decides the law
If there is a jury, jurors determine the facts

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What is the Job of U.S. Magistrate Judges?

Do Mediation

Settle Cases with Methods of Alternative Dispute Resolution



Conduct Trials

Conduct Trials with Consent of the Parties



Serve as Special Master

Handle Complex and/or Time-Consuming Cases



Handle Pre-Trial Matters

Preside Over Arraignments, Motions, Discovery



U.S. Magistrate Judges are Federal Judges Appointed on Merit by the U.S. District Court.

They hear cases authorized by law and assigned by District Judges.

U.S. Magistrate Judges

Conduct misdemeanor trials with consent of the parties.

Settle civil cases using alternative methods of dispute resolution.

Handle pre-trial and discovery proceedings for trials conducted by U.S. District Court Judges

Their Role

U.S. Magistrate Judges are often the first judge that litigants encounter. They help expedite justice by reducing congestion in trial courts. They handle certain kinds of matters and proceedings

Magistrate Judges serve in the Judicial Branch, as described in Article III of the U.S. Constitution. They take the oath of office required of all Article III judges.

Oath of Office: Justices and Judges

Each justice or judge of the United States shall take the following oath or affirmation before performing the duties of his office:

"I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich, and that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent upon me as ___ under the Constitution and laws of the United States. So help me God."

June 25, 1948, ch. 646, 62 Stat. 907; Pub. L. 101-650, title IV, § 404, Dec. 1, 1990, 104 Stat. 5124.

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You Can

Join the Journey Toward Justice

The law offers many opportunities to serve.

Federal courts are in every state. Most jobs don't require a law degree.

Serve as a Juror and See that Justice is Served

Did you know? Most jury trials last about three days.

Juror Qualifications

- Must be a U.S. citizen
- Adequate English
- No felony charges or convictions
- Reside primarily in the judicial district for at least one year
- Must be at least 18
- Physically and mentally able to serve

Serve as a Judge: The Jury's Partner in Justice

Typical Pathway



- △ Work as a Lawyer
- △ Pass the Bar Exam
- △ Law Degree
- △ College Degree

△ Be Appointed or Elected

Serve as a Lawyer - Be Part of the Solution

Typical Pathway



- △ Pass the Bar Exam
- △ Law Degree
- △ College Degree

As an attorney, you can advance the journey toward justice in these and many other ways.

- Social causes
- Criminal work
- Employment and business
- Sports and entertainment
- Science, medicine, IT, inventions
- Environment and regulations
- Government service

Serve in the Courts - Help the System Work

Typical Pathway



Contribute to justice on the administrative side of the courts.

Work in any field, including:

- △ College Degree

- Management and policy
- Information systems
- Finance and budget
- Human resources
- Probation and pretrial services

Find out more about careers in the federal courts at uscourts.gov

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