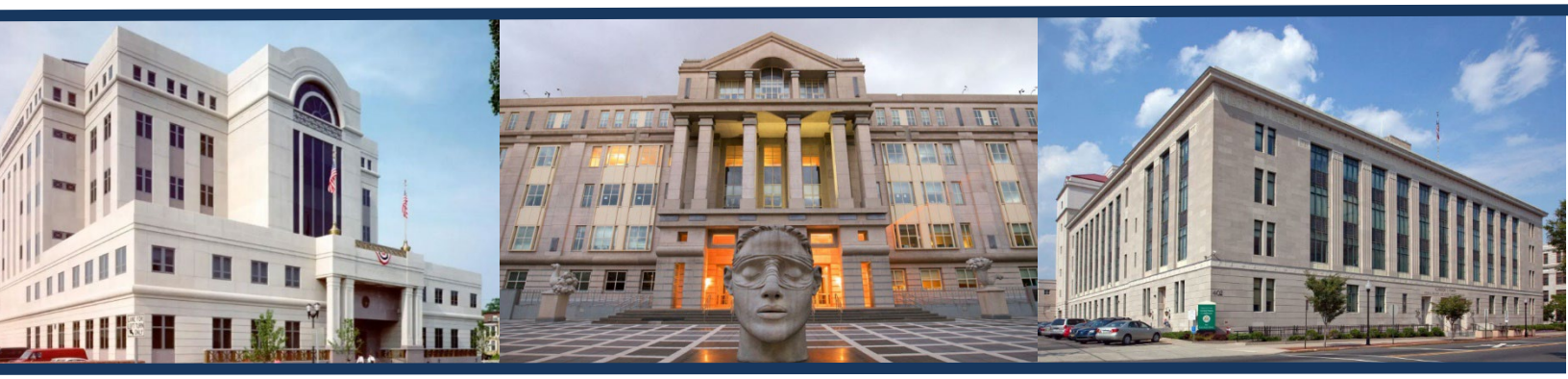
ALL ABOUT THE FEDERAL COURTS

STUDENT RESOURCE AND ACTIVITY BOOK



U.S. DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

Welcome!

Federal courts play an important role in our country's democracy. An independent judicial system helps citizens resolve their disputes peacefully and provides equal access to justice to people of all backgrounds.

The United States District Court for the District of New Jersey is pleased to present this fun, educational resource designed to help students learn about the functions of our federal judiciary. The activities in this workbook will help explain how the federal courts work, why federal courts are important, and how our work differs from that of state courts.

THE FEDERAL COURTS

SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States. It consists of 1 Chief Justice and 8 Associate Justices, for a total of 9 justices. The Supreme Court is the court of final appeal for civil and criminal cases involving the Constitution or the laws of the United States.

DISTRICT COURTS

The District Courts are the nation's federal trial courts. There are 94 District Courts in the United States. These courts often utilize juries to decide a case.

COURTS OF APPEALS

There are 13 Courts of Appeals that sit below the Supreme Court. They are considered intermediate appellate courts. They are divided into regional circuits, except for the Federal Circuit, which hears specialized cases nationwide involving patents, trademark registrations, government contracts, and veterans' benefits. Their job is to determine if the law was applied correctly in the trial court. The Appeals Court panel consists of 3 judges and does not use a jury.

BANKRUPTCY COURTS

Bankruptcy Courts supervise liquidation or reorganization of a person or business's assets when they can no longer pay their creditors. All bankruptcy cases are filed in federal court.

ARTICLE I COURTS

Article I Courts do not have full judicial powers. They were created by Congress to handle specific types of claims. The Article I Courts are the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, and U.S. Tax Court.

ARTICLE II CREATES THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Article II of the Constitution vests the executive power in the President, who is elected by the Electoral College and can make treaties, appoint officers, and command the military. Article II also defines the powers and duties of the President, the Vice President, and the impeachment process. The United States Department of Justice, led by the Attorney General, is a federal agency in the executive branch charged with enforcing federal law and administering justice in the United States.

The President appoints a United States Attorney, who is an official in the U.S. Department of Justice, to each of the 94 federal districts. The United States Attorney is the chief federal law enforcement officer in his/her/their district and is also involved in civil litigation where the United States is a party.

ARTICLE III COURTS

Article III, Section I of the Constitution created the Supreme Court and gave Congress the power to create additional courts:

"The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Offices during good Behaviour, and shall, at stated Times, receive for their Services, a Compensation, which shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office."

WHO WORKS AT A FEDERAL COURTHOUSE?

There are many important jobs at the Federal Court.
A few key positions include...

DISTRICT JUDGE

District Judges are trial court judges for the federal courts. They hear civil and criminal cases. District Court judges are appointed by the President, confirmed by the Senate, and serve lifetime appointments as long as they do not violate the terms of what the Constitution calls "good behavior."

As of August 2024, the District of New Jersey has 17 Active District Judges and 4 Senior Judges. Active Judges maintain full caseloads and engage in the full range of judicial responsibilities. Senior Judges are Judges who have reached retirement age but still hear cases. Often, they maintain a reduced caseload and may elect to reduce the range of cases over which they preside.

MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Magistrate Judges are independent judicial officers who are responsible for conducting initial proceedings in criminal cases, pretrial civil and criminal matters, settlement conferences, and may decide civil cases with the consent of all parties. They are appointed by District Judges to eight-year terms.

As of August 2024, the District of Jersey has 16 full-time and one part-time Magistrate Judge.

BANKRUPTCY JUDGE

Bankruptcy Judges are Article I Judges appointed by the Judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for their Circuit to renewable 14-year terms as set forth in the Bankruptcy Amendments and Federal Judgeship Act of 1984.

Bankruptcy Judges are independent judicial officers who preside exclusively over all cases under Title 11, the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. The fundamental goal of the Bankruptcy Code is to grant debtors a fresh start from overwhelming debt. To reach this goal, Bankruptcy Judges preside over bankruptcy filings, hear and rule on motions, review and approve bankruptcy plans, and resolve disputes between creditors and debtors.

To better understand bankruptcy and the process, please visit:

https://www.uscourts.gov/court-programs/bankruptcy/bankruptcy-basics

COURT REPORTER

A Court Reporter transcribes spoken speech into written form using machine shorthand. The written copy produced serves as the official transcript of a court hearing or trial.

COURTROOM DEPUTY

A Courtroom Deputy assists a judge with processing and managing court proceedings. The deputy also manages the judge's caseload.

CLERK OF COURT

The Clerk of Court is an officer of the court who is responsible for managing and maintaining the court's records. The Clerk supervises a staff of deputy clerks, who assist with these duties.

The current Clerk of Court for the District of New Jersey is Melissa E. Rhoads. The prior Clerk of Court was William T. Walsh, who was the longest serving Clerk of Court in the nation at the time of his retirement in 2023.

LAW CLERK

Law Clerks are attorneys who work for Federal Judges. They review, summarize, research, and analyze cases before the court. They assist in conducting legal research, drafting written opinions (decisions), reviewing motions (applications to the Court) and making recommendations for resolving those motions.

COMMON COURTROOM TERMS

ACQUITTAL

Judgment that a criminal defendant has not been proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt; in other words, a verdict of "not guilty."

APPEAL

A request, made by a party after losing a case, that a higher court (appellate court) review the trial court's decision to determine if it was correct.

ARRAIGNMENT

The appearance before a judge by a person charged with a crime to enter his/her plea.

BENCH

Judge's desk, usually raised, where the judge sits while presiding in the courtroom.

BENCH TRIAL

Trial without a jury in which the judge decides which party prevails.

BENCH WARRANT

Order signed by a judge for a person's arrest.

BRIEF

A written statement submitted by each party in a case that explains why the court should decide the case, or particular issues in a case, in that party's favor.

CHAMBERS

A judge's private office, typically including workspace for the judge's law clerks and administrative assistant.

CONTRACT

An agreement between two or more parties, often involving payment for goods or services.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

Questions posed to a witness by the opposing party's legal counsel.

DAMAGES

Money awarded as a result of court proceedings to a person injured by unlawful actions or negligence of another party.

DEPOSITION

An oral statement made and recorded before an authorized party; these statements are often taken to examine potential witnesses, obtain discovery, or for use in trial.

DEFENDANT

The accused party in a court proceeding.

DISCOVERY

The process before a trial allowing one party to learn what evidence the other party will introduce during the trial.

DOCKET

List of cases to be heard by a court.

EXHIBIT

Item or document, such as a weapon, used as evidence during a trial.

FELONY

Serious crime, such as robbery or attempted murder, for which the consequence is a prison sentence of at least one year.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

As defined by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, "financial literacy" describes the skills, knowledge and tools that equip people to make individual financial decisions and actions to attain their goals; this may also be known as financial capability, especially when paired with access to financial products and services. It involves financial skills that include managing one's personal finances, budgeting and investing.

GRAND JURY

Group of citizens who listen to evidence of criminal allegations, which is presented by the prosecutor, and determine if there is enough evidence to charge the party under investigation with a crime.

HUNG JURY

Jury that cannot agree on a verdict.

INDICTMENT

Formal charge issued by a grand jury stating that there is enough evidence of criminal wrongdoing by a defendant to justify having a trial; used primarily for felonies.

PETIT JURY

Group of citizens who hear the evidence presented by both sides at trial and determine the facts in dispute; federal criminal juries consist of 12 people, while federal civil juries must have at least 6 people.

MIRANDA WARNING

A police officer's warning prior to questioning suspects in custody advising them of their constitutional rights including the right to remain silent and to have an attorney.

MOTIVE

A need or desire that causes a person to commit an act.

PLAINTIFF

Party who starts a civil lawsuit against another party.

PLEA

A defendant's formal declaration in court that he or she is guilty or not guilty.

PROBABLE CAUSE

Reasonable legal basis for allowing the search and seizure of evidence or arrest of a person.

PROSECUTOR

A lawyer who represents the government in a criminal case; in federal court, the prosecutor is an attorney from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

SEARCH WARRANT

A judge's signed order allowing law enforcement to search a specific area for evidence of a crime.

SENTENCE

Punishment assigned to a defendant found guilty of a crime in court.

TESTIMONY

A formal statement given by a witness under oath.

TRANSCRIPT

Official record of court proceedings.

VERDICT

Decision of a jury, reached after it has weighed all evidence presented during a trial.

STATE v. FEDERAL JURISDICTION

FEDERAL

- Crimes violating statutes enacted by Congress
- Cases involving federal laws or regulations
- Matters involving interstate or international commerce
- Matters in which the United States or a federal agency is a party
- Patent and copyright issues
- State law cases involving "Diversity of Citizenship" (opposing parties reside in different states)
- Bankruptcy matters
- Disputes between states
- Habeas corpus actions

STATE

- Crimes violating legislation enacted by a state
- State constitution issues and civil cases involving state laws
- Landlord and tenant disputes
- Family law issues
- Real property issues
- Most private contract disputes
- Most personal injury disputes
- Probate and inheritance matters
- Most traffic violations

BOTH

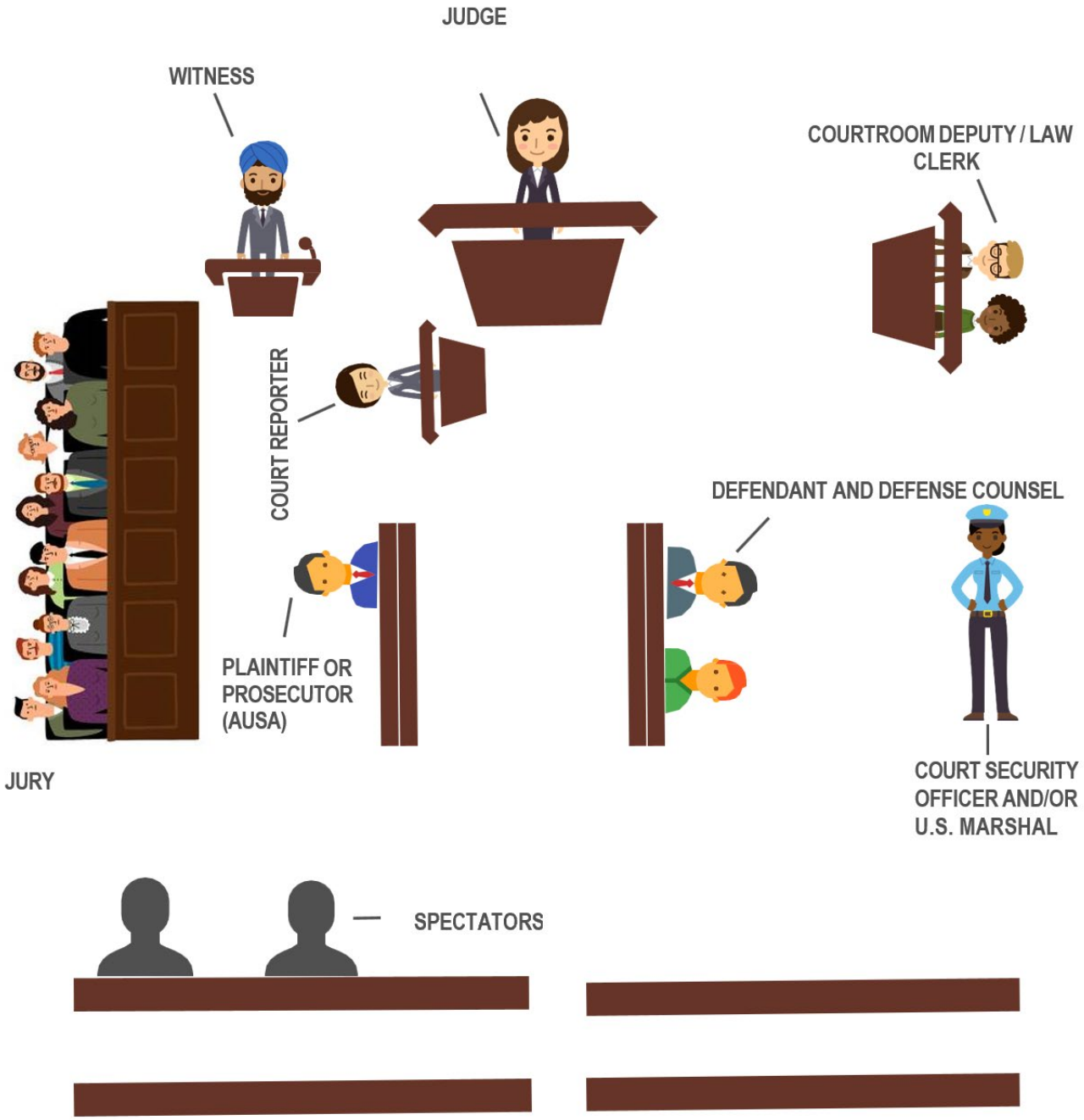
- Crimes punishable under both state and federal law
- Federal constitutional issues
- Certain civil rights' claims
- Class action cases
- Environmental regulations
- Certain disputes involving federal law

FUN FACTS ABOUT

THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

- The District of New Jersey has three vicinages - Trenton, Newark and Camden.
- The District of New Jersey has 17 active District Judges as of October 2024.
- The District of New Jersey was established in 1789.
- The Judiciary Act of 1801 reorganized the federal court system dividing the state into two districts – Eastern and Western. The Act was repealed on March 8, 1802, and New Jersey was re-established as a single district court.
- The District of New Jersey is the second oldest court in the United States.

WHO SITS WHERE IN THE COURTROOM



ACTIVITIES

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH THESE FUN, COURT-THEMED CHALLENGES

CIVICS QUESTIONS I: Test your knowledge of civics by answering 10 multiple-choice civics questions that are asked by applicants applying to be citizens of the United States.

CIVICS QUESTIONS II: Test your knowledge of civics by answering 10 open-ended civics questions. Applicants seeking to become citizens of the United States are asked these types of questions and have to provide their answers orally.

WORD PUZZLE: Using the words in the word bank provided, complete the crossword puzzle-styled paragraph about the timeline of a federal criminal case.

WORD SEARCH: Find the District of New Jersey's Judges' names in the puzzle. The last names are listed forwards and backwards, horizontally, and up-and-down.

UNSCRAMBLE: Unscramble the list of legal terms. If you need a hint, look at the word bank.

CIVICS QUESTIONS I

In order to become a United States citizen, citizen applicants must pass a test administered by a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Officer. In order to pass the test, the applicant must answer 6 out of 10 questions correctly.

Answer the following 10 multiple choice questions and see if you can answer 6 out of 10 of the questions correctly.

1. **What are two rights in the Declaration of Independence?**
   - **a)** Life and death
   - **b)** Liberty and justice
   - **c)** Freedom of Speech and freedom to assemble
   - **d)** Life and the pursuit of happiness

2. **What did Martin Luther King, Jr. do?**
   - **a)** Ran for President of the United States
   - **b)** Fought for women's right to vote
   - **c)** Signed the Declaration of Independence
   - **d)** Fought for civil rights

3. **Who was the first President of the United States?**
   - **a)** John Hancock
   - **b)** George Washington
   - **c)** Benjamin Franklin
   - **d)** Abraham Lincoln

4. **What does the Constitution do?**
   - **a)** Protects basic rights of Americans
   - **b)** Sets up the government
   - **c)** Defines the government
   - **d)** All of these answers

5. **What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?**
   - **a)** Write to a newspaper and call Senators and Representatives
   - **b)** Vote and join a civic group
   - **c)** Give an elected official your opinion on an issue and join a community group
   - **d)** All of these answers

6. **During the Cold War, what was the main concern of the United States?**
   - **a)** Communism
   - **b)** Climate change
   - **c)** Slavery
   - **d)** Frost Bite

7. **Name one problem that led to the Civil War.**
   - **a)** Oil
   - **b)** Women's voting rights
   - **c)** Westward expansion
   - **d)** Slavery

8. **What is the highest court in the United States?**
   - **a)** The District Court.
   - **b)** The Court of Appeals.
   - **c)** The Supreme Court.
   - **d)** The Court of International Trade.

9. **What did Susan B. Anthony do?**
   - **a)** Made the first American flag
   - **b)** Fought for women's rights
   - **c)** Founded the Red Cross
   - **d)** Served as the first female Speaker of the House

10. **The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words?**
    - **a)** We the Colonists
    - **b)** Congress shall make
    - **c)** We the British
    - **d)** We the People

CIVICS QUESTIONS II

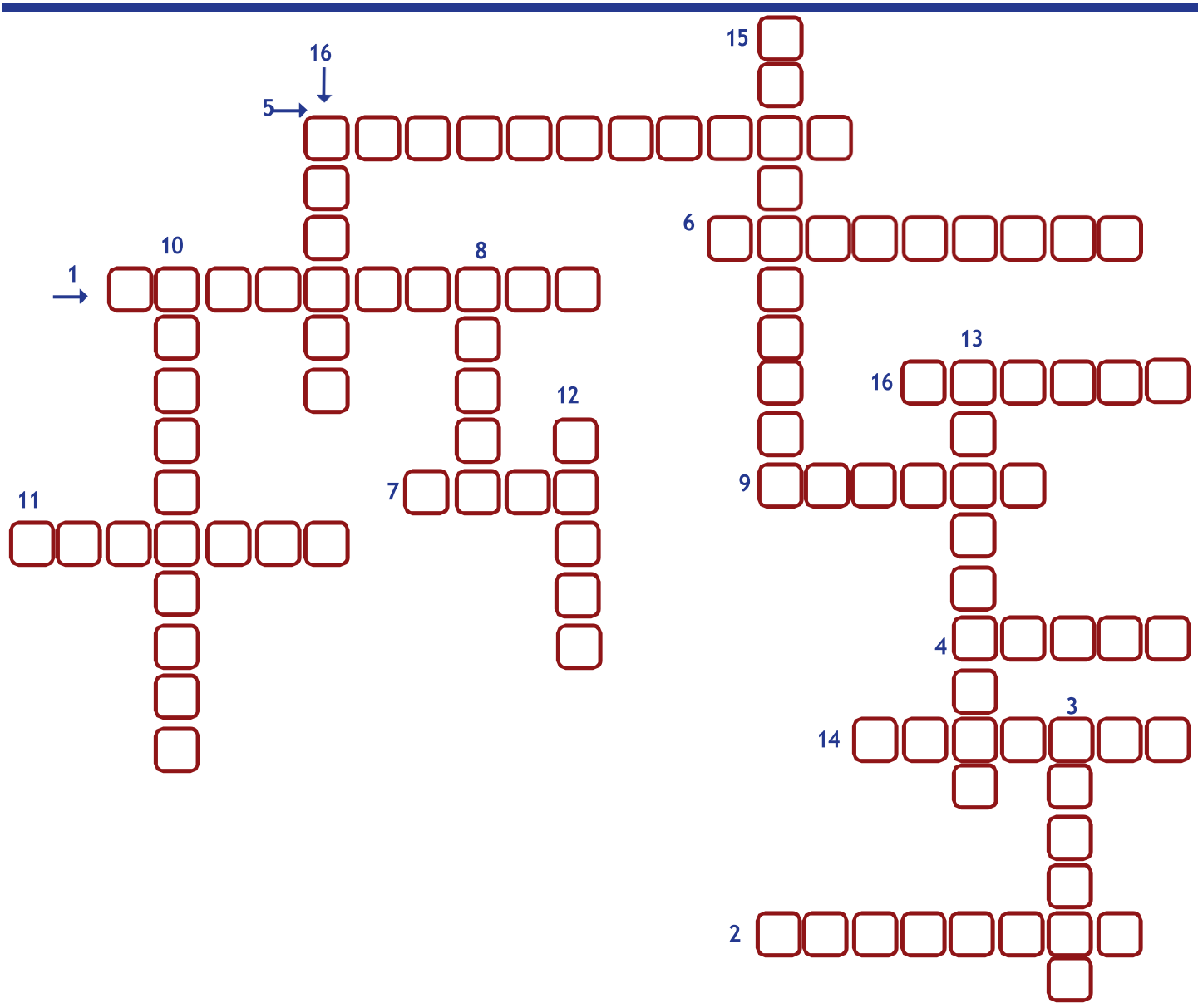
As previously stated, in order to become a United States citizen, citizen applicants must pass a test administered by a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Officer. In order to pass the test, the applicant must answer 6 out of 10 questions correctly. The actual civil test is an oral test without multiple choice answers provided. Therefore, this time around, no multiple choice answers are provided.

Answer the following 10 questions in the space provided.

1. What do we call the first ten amendments to the Constitution? _____
2. How many amendments does the Constitution have? _____
3. What stops one branch of government from becoming too powerful? _____
4. How many U.S. Senators are there? _____
5. There were 13 original states. Name two. _____
6. Name one war fought by the United States in the 1800s. _____
7. Name one American Indian tribe in the United States. _____
8. Name one U.S. territory. _____
9. Before he was President, Eisenhower was a general. What war was he in? _____
10. What did the Emancipation Proclamation do? _____

Did you answer 6 out of 10 of the questions correctly?

WORD PUZZLE



A federal criminal case begins when the __1__ presents __2__ to a grand jury. After reviewing the evidence, the grand jury decides if there is sufficient proof to __3__ the accused party. The accused is then brought before a __4__ for __5__ on the charge. A __6__ can choose to plead guilty or not guilty. If a not guilty __7__ is entered, the case is scheduled for __8__ at a later date. If a __9__ plea is entered, the court sets a sentencing date.

If a case goes to trial, the prosecution must establish the defendant's guilt beyond a __10__ doubt . A __11__ may testify and evidence will be presented. Based on all of the __12__ of the case, a __13__ of 12 citizens will decide whether or not the defendant is guilty. If the __14__ is not guilty, the defendant is free to go. If found guilty, the accused will return at a later date for __15__. After the judge sentences a defendant, the individual may choose to __16__ the conviction to a higher court.

WORD BANK: FACTS DEFENDANT EVIDENCE ARRAIGNMENT REASONABLE TRIAL APPEAL JUDGE INDICT SENTENCING WITNESS PROSECUTOR VERDICT GUILTY PLEA PETIT JURY

VOCABULARY QUIZ

1. **How many judges make up an appeals court panel?**
   - **a)** 1
   - **b)** 3
   - **c)** 5

2. **Citizens called by the court to decide a case are called...**
   - **a)** Jurors
   - **b)** Witnesses
   - **c)** Trustees

3. **Who was the first woman and first African American judge appointed to the federal bench in the District of New Jersey?**
   - **a)** Sandra Day O'Connor
   - **b)** Anne E. Thompson
   - **c)** Sarah Evans Barker

4. **A _____ assists a judge with processing and managing court proceedings.**
   - **a)** Courtroom Deputy
   - **b)** Law Clerk
   - **c)** Clerk of Court

5. **The person in a courtroom who creates a word-for-word record of a court proceeding is a …**
   - **a)** Clerk of Court
   - **b)** Plaintiff
   - **c)** Court Reporter

6. **The United States District Court for the District of New Jersey is part of the ____ judicial circuit.**
   - **a)** 11th
   - **b)** 3rd
   - **c)** 5th

7. **Acquittal means…**
   - **a)** a verdict of guilty
   - **b)** a verdict of not guilty
   - **c)** an inconclusive verdict; a hung jury.

8. **Which of the following is NOT a District of New Jersey vicinage?**
   - **a)** Camden
   - **b)** Philadelphia
   - **c)** Trenton

9. **What Federal Court is the court of final appeal for civil and criminal matters?**
   - **a)** Court of Appeals
   - **b)** Supreme Court
   - **c)** District Court

10. **A _____ conducts initial court proceedings and pretrial matters on behalf of a District Judge.**
    - **a)** Magistrate Judge
    - **b)** Law Clerk
    - **c)** Courtroom Deputy

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK!

A _____ is an order to have a person arrested and brought to court.

If a jury is unable to decide a case, they are called a _____.

A case involving patent or copyright law is said to be within _____ jurisdiction. In a _____, questions are posed to a witness who testified for the other side.

A person charged with committing a crime is known as a _____.

A _____ is responsible for assisting a judge with research, drafting opinions, and related tasks.

A District Judge is appointed by the _____and confirmed by the _____.

A trial without a jury in which the judge decides which party prevails is known as a _____.

A judge's private office is known as a _____.

A list of cases to be heard by a court is known as the _____.

When the police have _____, they have proven sufficient legal basis for allowing the search and seizure of evidence.

The official record of all testimony and exhibits presented during a court proceeding is known as a _____.

WORD BANK

PROBABLE CAUSE
HUNG JURY
LAW CLERK
DOCKET
SENATE
BENCH TRIAL
BENCH WARRANT
CHAMBERS
FEDERAL
CROSS-EXAMINATION
DEFENDANT
PRESIDENT
TRANSCRIPT

NAME SEARCH

Find the names listed to left in the below puzzle.

BUMB
DONIO
KIEL
KING
OHEARN
PASCAL
RODRIGUEZ
SKAHILL
WILLIAMS
ADAMS
ALLEN
ALMONTE
ARLEO
CECCHI
CHESLER
CLARK
ESPINOSA
FARBIARZ
HAMMER
HAYDEN
MARTINI
MARTINOTTI
NEALS
PADIN
SALAS
SEMPER
WALDOR
WETTRE
WIGENTON
BERGMAN
BONGIOVANNI
CASTNER
DAY
KIRSCH
QUINN
QURAISHI
SHERIDAN
SHIPP
SINGH

Q	A	W	I	N	O	T	N	E	G	I	W	C	Y
N	U	D	E	W	I	R	F	Y	D	A	E	E	Q
E	O	V	S	K	A	H	I	L	L	E	T	C	A
S	M	I	A	D	A	M	S	D	G	R	T	Q	L
C	E	Q	R	U	Z	D	O	N	I	O	R	U	C
C	E	S	L	E	R	R	C	E	H	A	E	I	L
E	I	K	E	L	A	E	S	P	I	N	O	S	A
C	H	E	O	T	I	P	R	I	E	D	Y	Q	R
C	O	L	E	R	B	M	T	T	I	L	O	D	K
H	C	A	P	A	R	E	S	U	N	T	P	T	E
I	T	S	A	L	A	S	C	S	E	O	P	B	R
T	O	L	D	M	F	P	B	L	L	S	I	O	N
T	H	A	I	O	U	I	M	J	L	A	H	E	R
O	E	E	N	N	Y	Q	U	R	A	I	S	H	I
N	R	N	T	T	T	A	B	H	C	I	M	C	D
I	N	E	N	E	W	I	L	L	I	A	M	S	R
T	A	R	E	A	E	O	H	C	C	E	L	R	A
R	H	A	M	M	E	R	L	E	A	B	P	I	C
A	B	H	A	Y	D	E	N	M	E	R	N	K	O
M	S	O	R	M	E	T	H	D	C	N	I	N	N
O	P	N	T	R	I	A	P	P	A	S	C	A	L
H	G	N	I	S	A	N	R	V	S	Y	E	D	A
E	E	A	N	C	N	N	O	A	T	I	F	E	R
A	O	M	I	H	K	I	E	L	N	R	E	Y	N
R	J	G	M	G	G	U	P	T	E	F	I	A	G
N	A	R	C	N	T	Q	N	A	R	E	T	I	L
S	E	E	O	I	N	A	D	I	R	E	H	S	E
W	O	B	P	K	V	R	E	L	S	E	H	C	G
E	L	I	Z	E	U	G	I	R	D	O	R	L	A

WORD UNSCRAMBLE

Unscramble the below legal words. If you need a hint, check out the word bank.

1. ARLPOE = _____
2. EDUGJ = _____
3. MHSECARB = _____
4. RTAAWRN = _____
5. UATQACITL = _____
6. NTINDCMITE = _____
7. PDIIONESTO = _____
8. ASTRNRPCTI = _____
9. BNHEC = _____
10. MAEASGD = _____
11. UYJR = _____
12. EDVITRC = _____
13. PAALPE = _____
14. ELPA = _____
15. SIYNTTMEO = _____
16. CTANROTC = _____
17. TSIESNW = _____
18. ECKLR = _____
19. KOTDCE = _____
20. FIRBE = _____

WORD BANK

DAMAGES	VERDICT	CHAMBERS	WITNESS
CLERK	BRIEF	PLEA	WARRANT
JUDGE	DEPOSITION	DOCKET	TRANSCRIPT
ACQUITTAL	PAROLE	CONTRACT	APPEAL
BENCH	TESTIMONY	JURY	INDICTMENT

CAMDEN
Mitchell H. Cohen Building
& U.S. Courthouse
4th & Cooper Streets
Camden, NJ 08101
856-757-5021

NEWARK
Martin Luther King Building
& U.S. Courthouse
50 Walnut Street
Newark, NJ 07102
973-645-3730

TRENTON
Clarkson S. Fisher Building
& U.S. Courthouse
402 East State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608
609-989-2065

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