
CRASH COURSE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

EPISODE 18: LEGAL SYSTEM BASICS

TIMESTAMPED STUDENT QUESTIONS

1. Kings used to perform this function, but as nations got larger and more powerful it became more efficient for specialized officials do it. Which function of the courts is being described? (1:05)
2. What law is given as an example of one with a “few famous errors” in it, such that it needed to be interpreted by the courts? (1:23)
3. How does an efficient court system make people more likely to engage in commerce? (1:44)
4. In what level of court does most legal action in the U.S. happen? (2:01)
5. What principle of government means that the federal court system needs to be in a different branch from the executive and legislative branches? (2:17)
6. When a lower court makes a decision, where can it be appealed? (2:33)
7. Federal courts can perform judicial review, which means to declare things invalid. List three things that they can declare invalid? (2:39)
8. Why are judges appointed for life and guaranteed a salary that can't be reduced? (2:49)
9. What is a written law called? (2:59)
10. What phrase refers to the English and American tradition of letting the past decisions of courts influence future legal decisions? (3:13)
11. “Jurisdiction” determines which kinds of cases a court has the power to decide. What kind of jurisdiction does a trial court have? (3:45)
12. What is a bench trial? (4:18)
13. What happens to 90% of cases? (4:25)
14. What kind of court has appellate jurisdiction, meaning that it reviews cases sent to it by other courts? (4:44)
15. When there is an actual law for you to break, you are in the realm of ----- (5:42)
16. If you are involved in a lawsuit, you are in the realm of ----- law. (6:05)
17. When someone in court can show that the power of government, the rights of citizens, or federal law is involved in the case, you are also in the realm of ----- law. (6:39)
18. What aspect of the court system shows federalism in action? (7:04)

Extra Credit Questions / Discussion Prompts

- Why is it important that appeals courts exist?
- Should judges have to follow the common law and be bound by other judges' decisions, even when they strongly disagree with them?
- How many examples of judicial review can you recall from U.S. history?