

ENGLISH

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MATTERS



LEGAL ENGLISH

DODATEK

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Legal English

Dear reader, unless you are pursuing a career in the legal profession, we hope you never need some of this vocabulary! But if you do need it, this guide to legal English could prove invaluable, as the language of law is very specific and crucially important in the justice system. A lot of legal language is also included in documents used for international business, so it's good to know. In this guide, we've included courtroom vocab and legal terms which could be seen on documents – we consider it useful info, but we'll let you be the judge!

to pursue sth *tə pə'sju: 'sʌmθɪŋ* | *tu:* realizować/robić coś, wykonywać

to prove | okazać się

invaluable *ɪn'væljuəbl* | bezcenny

law *lɔ:* | prawo

included | zawarty

courtroom | sala sądowa

judge | sędzia

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Two Types of Law

There are two main categories of law: civil law and criminal law. Civil law deals with the rules and regulations of life, for example where you can build a house, custody of children when parents divorce, etcetera. Criminal law deals with the rules and regulations for criminal activity, in other words how and why it is against the law to commit a crime. Examples include robbery, fraud or manslaughter.

custody of children | opieka nad dziećmi (przyznawana po rozwodzie rodziców)

to divorce | brać rozwód

in other words | innymi słowy

to commit a crime | popełnić przestępstwo

robbery | rabunek

fraud ^{fɹɔ:d} | oszustwo

manslaughter | zabójstwo

Court is in Session

The most common association people make when they hear the term ‘law’ is with a court. The court is the place where trials take place – think the set of *Suits* or the classic *Ally McBeal*. It’s a place where the lives of many are decided, with lawyers, judges and juries working to find the accused guilty or innocent. Here is a collection of vocab used in court, categorised by word type:

court | sąd

trial | proces

lawyer ^{ˈlɔː(r)} | prawnik

accused | oskarżony

guilty | winny

innocent ^{ˈɪnəsnt} | niewinny

Verbs:

- **accuse** | to say you believe somebody committed a crime. “Terry is going to court because he was accused of fraud.”
- **acquit** | when a court decides to give no punishment, usually because no crime has been committed.
- **affirm** | to solemnly promise to tell the truth in court.

- **appeal** | to ask for a higher court to reassess the judgement of a court case.
- **bail** | to pay or promise to pay a certain amount of money so an accused person can be released from jail.
- **breach** | to fail to do something that was previously agreed to.
- **charge** | to formally accuse someone of a crime, usually done by police. “The police charged Terry with fraud this morning.”
- **claim** | to assert what you believe to be true or right.
- **commit** | to perform an action which constitutes a crime.
- **prove** | to show that something is true or factual.
- **sue** | to start legal proceedings against someone/an entity with the goal of receiving compensation for damages or wrongdoing, “he sued his neighbours for damaging his fence.”
- **testify** | to officially state what happened, as a witness to a crime, while taking the stand in court.

to acquit sb *tu ə'kwɪt 'sʌmbədi* | uniewinniać kogoś

punishment | kara

solemnly | uroczyście

to appeal | składać apelację

to bail sb | wpłacać za kogoś kaucję, poręczyć za kogoś

released | wypuszczony

to breach sth | pogwałcić coś, naruszyć (np. ustaloną zasadę)

to fail | odnieść porażkę

previously | uprzednio

to charge sb with sth | oskarżyć kogoś o coś

to assert | zapewniać, utrzymywać

to constitute sth | stanowić coś

to sue sb *tə su: 'sʌmbədi* | pozywać kogoś

wrongdoing | przestępstwo, wykroczenie

to testify | zeznawać

Adjectives:

- **guilty** | when it is proved that a person committed a crime, they are found guilty.
- **illegal** | against the law.
- **innocent** | when it is proved that a person did not commit a crime, they are found innocent.

Nouns:

- **(the) accused** | this is a term for the person who is on trial. "Terry is the accused."
- **advocate** | a legal professional who pleads on behalf of the accused in court.
- **barrister** | a special kind of lawyer who defends people in court.
- **case** | the whole legal process surrounding one situation. The thing that is ultimately decided upon in court.
- **courtroom** | literally the place in court where the trial happens.
- **defendant** | the person who has been accused/charged with a crime and is (probably) trying to prove their innocence.
- **defence attorney** | a lawyer who is working for the defendant.
- **deposition** | sworn evidence which is given by a person either verbally or in writing.
- **evidence** | all the material (including physical objects and deposition) which prove the facts of a crime (and therefore the innocence or guilt of the defendant).
- **fine** | a punishment in the form of money. "She had to pay a fine for her environmental crimes."
- **judge** | the person who is in charge in court. They make the final decision.
- **jury** | a group of people from the public who are chosen to listen to a court case and decide if the accused is guilty or innocent.
- **lawsuit** | a claim or dispute brought to court for judgement, "he filed a lawsuit against his former employer for unfair dismissal."
- **lawyer** | a person who studied law and has qualified to perform legal duties.

to plead | występować w czyjejś obronie, odpowiadać na zarzuty

on behalf of sb | w imieniu kogoś

barrister | adwokat, obrońca

to defend sb | bronić kogoś

ultimately | ostatecznie

literally | dosłownie

defendant | oskarżony

innocence | niewinność

defence attorney | obrońca, adwokat

evidence | dowody

including sth | włącznie z czymś

fine | grzywna

environmental crime *ɪnˌvaɪrən'mentl kraɪm* | przestępstwo przeciwko środowisku

lawsuit | pozew sądowy

former | były

employer | pracodawca

dismissal | zwolnienie

- **misdemeanour** | a minor illegal action which is not considered a serious crime, for example dropping litter.
- **oath** | a formal promise to tell the truth, usually involving a religious aspect such as promising to God.
- **parole** | the release of a prisoner before their sentence has been fully served. Usually offered in return for good behaviour, the prisoner is carefully monitored.
- **plea** | the official statement of the accused regarding their guilt/innocence.
- **prosecutor** | the lawyer trying to prove the accused is guilty.
- **solicitor** | a legal professional who mainly performs their legal work outside of court.
- **subpoena** | a formal request that somebody appears in court.
- **testimony** | a formal statement of what happened (when you testify, you give your testimony).
- **verdict** | the result of the court case. It includes the decision of guilt/innocence and the following actions regarding punishment/payment etcetera.
- **warrant** | an official document issued by a legal or government official, instructing/allowing the police to take a certain action, usually search a premises or arrest someone.
- **witness** | a person who saw a crime happen; they are usually asked to recount the event in court under oath.

misdemeanour ,mɪsdɪˈmiːnə(r) | występpek, wykroczenie

minor | drobny, niegroźny

dropping litter | śmiecenie

oath əʊθ | przysięga

parole pəˈrɔːl | warunkowe zwolnienie z więzienia

plea | powództwo

regarding sth | dotyczący czegoś

solicitor | radca prawny

subpoena səˈpiːnə | wezwanie do sądu

warrant | nakaz

premises | teren

witness | świadek

Phrases and Phrasal Verbs:

- **breach of trust** | failure to act responsibly with something (often confidential information) that has been left in your care.

breach of trust | nadużycie zaufania



- **breach of contract** | to fail to fulfil the terms agreed to in a contract
- **capital punishment** | also known as the death penalty. When the punishment for a crime is death.
- **enter into** | to start an official agreement, e.g. we entered into a freelance agreement with the applicant.
- **find in favour of/against** | used to announce the decision of the court, e.g. the judge found in favour of the defendant.
- **hand down** | 1. to announce and instruct enforcement of a sentence, e.g. the judge handed down a sentence of three years imprisonment. 2. to give something (property, money or responsibility) to the next person in line, e.g. the house was handed down to Peter when his father died.
- **rule in favour of/against** | to announce that a decision has been reached according to one side of the proceedings, e.g. the judge ruled in favour of the prosecution.
- **strike out** | when a judge removes a case from court (usually as there are not enough grounds for proceedings).
- **take the stand** | to appear at the front of the court and formally declare your version of events and answer questions from the lawyers and possibly the judge.

Words to Watch Out For

Legal English uses specific vocabulary. Usually it is enough to learn these words, such as those listed above, as new vocabulary, but sometimes legal English uses words which may seem familiar in meaning but in confusing ways. This is because there are a few words which have a different meaning (to the common one) in legal English. Here are a few examples:

Consideration:

Usual meaning: to think about something carefully, to remember about something when reaching a decision.

Legal meaning: a part of a contract, either payment or actions performed.

capital punishment | kara śmierci

enforcement | wprowadzenie w życie

sentence | *tu*: wyrok

imprisonment | uwięzienie, pozbawienie wolności

property | własność, mienie; nieruchomość

according to sb | według kogoś

to strike out sth | *tu*: odrzucać

grounds | podstawy

to take the stand | zeznawać w sądzie

to seem | wydawać się

familiar | znajomy

in confusing ways | w mylący sposób

Construction:

Usual meaning: a building.

Legal meaning: the interpretation of a contract by a lawyer, especially in areas of ambiguity.

Redemption:

Usual meaning: the act of being saved (especially from sin).

Legal meaning: repossession of something offered as a deposit.

Tender:

Usual meaning: sensitive, soft or delicate to the touch.

Legal meaning: an offer or proposal to supply goods or services for a certain price.

Legal Slang

With its set of unique vocabulary, it's no surprise that legal English also has a few slang terms that are specific to the subject. They are not really known by people who are not involved in the legal industry, even native speakers. Here's a few of the stranger ones:

- **Wobbler** | this is not anything related to jelly or a larger person's stomach, but is actually a case which is on the edge of being a crime or a misdemeanour.
- **Recess** | this term is perhaps not as strange as the rest in this section, especially not for anyone familiar with American school terms. 'Recess' is the name for a break in court sessions.
- **Tort** | sadly not a cake. In court, a 'tort' is any kind of wrongful act that harms a person and for which the perpetrator could be sued for damages.
- **Therefor** | not to be confused with 'therefore.' Therefor is a legal way of saying 'for this' or 'for that' for example, "she performed the services and accepted payment therefor."

ambiguity ˌæmbɪˈɡjuːəti | dwuznaczność

redemption | zbawienie, odkupienie, tu: wykup

sin | grzech

repossession | odzyskanie, wykup

tender | czuły; miękki, tu: przetarg, oferta przetargowa

to supply sth | dostarczyć coś

set | zestaw

involved in sth | zaangażowany w coś

jelly | galaretka

stomach ˈstʌmək | żołądek

actually | w rzeczywistości

break | przerwa

to harm sb | krzywdzić kogoś

perpetrator | sprawca przestępstwa

Attorney vs Lawyer vs Solicitor vs Barrister

There are several people whose job it is to help others trying to get their desired outcome from a court proceeding. What each of those professionals does and what the difference between them is, is sometimes confusing. Amongst the most confusing terms are; attorney, lawyer, solicitor and barrister. Here's the difference:

Solicitors and lawyers are the same thing – and the terms are increasingly used on both sides of the pond.

Barristers are people who represent clients in high courts. They wear wigs and gowns and give pleas on behalf of their clients. Attorneys are technically people who conduct business for other people, so a lawyer who is representing their client in court is technically an attorney. In the USA the terms are often used interchangeably.

Set the Bar High

To become a lawyer, first a person has to pass the bar. This is a special examination which sets qualified legal practitioners apart from not qualified ones. It's essentially the final exam for becoming a lawyer. The reason it is called 'the bar' is not because of the celebrations held after, but rather because of the design of a courthouse. In the courtroom, there is a metal bar which separates the seats from everything else. To work on the right side of that metal bar, an individual must be qualified. In other words, they are qualified to pass the bar.

desired | pożądaný

outcome | rezultat

proceeding *prə'siːdɪŋ* | postępowanie

increasingly | rosnąco

the pond | *pot.* Ocean Atlantycki

wig | peruka

gown *gaʊn* | toga

to conduct sth | prowadzić coś

interchangeably *ˌɪntə'tʃeɪndʒəbli* | wymiennie

to set the bar high | wieszać wysoko poprzeczkę

apart from sb | oprócz kogoś

A Few Crimes

Unfortunately, the main reason people end up in court using legal terms is crime. Here are a few common crimes that we hope you never encounter:

- **Assault** | causing physical harm to someone.
- **Forgery** | creating a false document. The word is also the noun for the fake document.
- **Fraud** | deliberate deception with the intent of gaining money.
- **Kidnapping** | capturing and/or detaining a person against their will.
- **Manslaughter** | killing a person but without malice.
- **Murder** | the deliberate act of killing someone with malice.
- **Negligence** | failing to take proper care of someone or something.
- **Perjury** | lying while under oath.
- **Robbery** | stealing something from a person or a place.
- **Sexual assault** | deliberately touching a person sexually without their consent.
- **Shoplifting** | stealing items from a shop.
- **Trespassing** | accessing private property without permission.
- **Vandalism** | the deliberate destruction of property which doesn't belong to you.

The Jury's Out

Whatever your reason for needing legal English – whether you're studying international law, or you just want to watch Suits without the subtitles on, we hope that this overview has given you a wealth of vocabulary to help you on your way. We may not love court proceedings, but when it comes to loving English vocabulary, we're guilty.

unfortunately | niestety
 to encounter sth | spotkać coś, natknąć się na coś
 assault | napaść
 forgery | fałszerstwo
 to detain sb | przetrzymywać kogoś
 against one's will | wbrew woli kogoś
 malice | premedytacja
 deliberate | celowy
 negligence 'neglɪdʒəns | zaniedbanie
 perjury 'pɜːdʒəri | krzywoprzysięstwo
 sexual assault | napaść na tle seksualnym
 without one's consent | bez czyjejś zgody
 trespassing | wtargnięcie na teren kogoś

WYDANIE SPECJALNE



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