

How Civil Cases Progress Through the Civil Courts

Demonstration Storyboard by A Pass Educational Group



Screen 1

Audio Narration

Welcome to SS125. In this lesson, you will learn how civil cases progress through the federal court systems. By following the progress of a realistic case through the court system, you will be introduced to the various types of federal courts, including their similarities and differences. You will also consider what happens when cases move from one court level to the next and how judicial rulings guide this progress.

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- **List** the various types of federal courts in which a case may appear
- **Identify** the similarities and differences in the three types of courts
- **Describe** what must happen for a case to move to a different court
- **Describe** the significance of a ruling at each court level

Visuals

How Civil Cases Progress Through the Civil Courts

List the various types of federal courts in which a case may appear

Identify the similarities and differences in the three types of courts

Describe what must happen for a case to move to a different court

Describe the significance of a ruling at each court level



Media Instructions

- Use court photo similar to Stock photo ID: 425197456
- Image should fill screen
- Play audio narration on screen open
- Show individual learning objectives one at a time over the image as they are mentioned in the audio
- Flash the forward arrow to prompt user to click to next screen

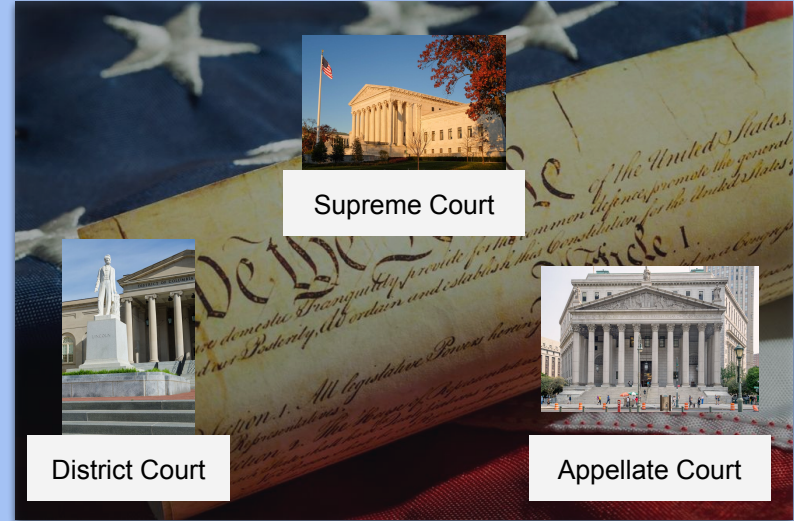
The U.S. Constitution describes three branches of government: the executive branch, or the presidency; the legislative branch, or Congress; and the judicial branch, or the federal court system.

Three types of federal courts make up the judicial branch of government. These include:

- U.S. District Courts
- U.S. Appellate Courts
- The U.S. Supreme Court

Click each of the court images to learn more about them.

Types of Federal Courts



Media Instructions

- Play opening audio narration and show Constitution photo on screen open
- Show photos of individual courts as they are mentioned in the audio
- When user clicks a court photo, show corresponding overlay and play corresponding audio

Screen 3

Audio Narration (U.S. District Courts)

The United States is divided into 94 districts. In each district there is a U.S. district court. The U.S. district courts are the federal trial courts—the places where federal cases are tried, witnessed, and juries serve.

Congress placed each of the 94 districts in one of twelve regional circuits. Each circuit has a court of appeals. If you lose a case in a district court, you can ask the court of appeals to review the case to see if the district judge applied the law correctly.

Audio Narration (U.S. Appellate Courts)

Appellate courts are empowered to hear an appeal of a trial court. There are three levels:

- The trial court, which initially hears cases and reviews evidence and testimony to determine the facts of the case
- The intermediate appellate court
- The Supreme court, which reviews the decisions of the intermediate courts

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit hears appeals from certain courts and agencies, such as the U.S. Court of International Trade, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, and the U.S. Patent and Trademark.

Visuals

Types of Federal Courts



U.S. District Courts

- 94 districts
- Exist within 12 regional circuits
- Where federal cases are tried
- If you lose here, can go to appellate court



U.S. Appellate Courts

- Hear appeals of a trial court
- Three levels: trial, intermediate, Supreme
- Review evidence and testimony
- Review decisions of other courts



U.S. Supreme Court

- Highest court in the country
- Decisions are not subject to any further review
- Hears appeals from lower courts
- Can decide to review or not review a case

Audio Narration (U.S. Supreme Court)

The Supreme Court of the United States is the highest court. The decisions of the Supreme Court are not subject to further review by any other court. The Supreme Court hears appeals from decisions of lower trial courts or from intermediate appellate courts. If you lose a case in the Court of Appeals, you can ask the Supreme Court to hear your appeal. However, the Supreme Court does not have to hear it. In fact, the Supreme Court hears only a very small percentage of the cases it is asked to review.

Screen 4

Audio Narration (Opening)

A civil case begins when a person believes he or she has been injured by the wrongful act of another person or organization. The injured person, called the plaintiff, files a complaint against the defendant, the person or organization that allegedly caused the injury.

In this case, “injury” can be physical, financial, or another type of wrongdoing.

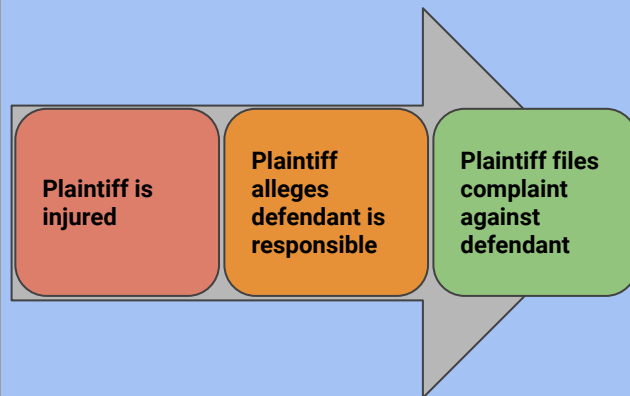
Throughout this course, we will look at the fictional civil case of Caldwell vs. Chang and follow its progress through the federal courts.

We will also check in occasionally with our legal expert, Miranda Justice, to study her analyses as the case proceeds.

Click **Track the Case!** To learn how Caldwell vs. Chang began.

Visuals

How a Federal Civil Case Begins



Track the Case!

Media Instructions

- Play opening audio narration on screen open
- Show individual steps of the process, one at a time as audio plays
- Show Miranda photo when she is mentioned in the audio
- When learner clicks **Track the Case!**, play track the case audio narration and fade out images on this screen, fading in the images on the next

Screen 5

Audio Narration (Track the Case!)

Edwin Chang is a general contractor in southwestern Pennsylvania. Lacey Caldwell is a homeowner in Morgantown, West Virginia who hired Mr. Chang to manage a major home addition project at her home in Morgantown. The total estimated cost of the home addition was \$120,000.

On May 17, 2012, Ms. Caldwell paid Mr. Chang a deposit of \$140,000 to pay for materials, which Chang needed to purchase before beginning on the home addition. Chang delivered a load of materials, on June 14, 2012. This partial delivery had a value of around \$10,000. On June 16, Chang subsequently requested a project labor fee of \$50,000 to hire subcontractors and begin the project. Caldwell delivered the check to Chang on June 17, 2012.

Mr. Chang never started the work, and repeated requests to return the \$100,000 were ignored. On August 1, Ms. Caldwell filed suit against Mr. Chang in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania. The lawsuit requested damages in the amount of \$100,000 to cover Ms. Caldwell's expenditures and additional punitive damages in the amount of \$15,000.

Visuals



Ask an Expert

Media Instructions

- When learner clicks **Ask an Expert**, open the expert overlay
- Flash the forward arrow to prompt user to click to next screen