

Legal Glossary

A Plain-Language Reference Guide

Navigating the legal system requires understanding the language used in court documents and by legal professionals. This glossary provides simple, clear definitions for some of the most common terms you will encounter.

Common Legal Terms

Term	Simple Definition	Context/Example
Plaintiff	The person who starts a lawsuit or brings a legal claim against another party.	If you are suing someone for damages, you are the Plaintiff.
Defendant	The person or entity being sued or accused in a legal case.	The person who allegedly caused the damage is the Defendant.
Motion	A formal, written request asking the judge to make a specific ruling or take a specific action.	A “Motion for Extension of Time” asks the judge for more time to file a document.
Evidence	Documents, testimony, physical items, or other information used to prove a fact or support a claim in court.	Receipts, photographs, and witness statements are all forms of Evidence.
Pleading	Formal written statements filed with the court that set out a party’s claims and defenses (e.g., the Complaint and the Answer).	The initial document filed by the Plaintiff is the first Pleading.
Subpoena	A court order requiring a person to appear in court to testify or to produce documents.	You may need to issue a Subpoena to a witness who is unwilling to testify voluntarily.
Jurisdiction	The official power of a court to hear a case and make a decision.	A Small Claims Court only has Jurisdiction over cases involving a certain dollar amount.
Verdict/Judgment	The final decision made by a jury (Verdict) or a judge (Judgment) that resolves the case.	If the judge rules in your favor, you have received a Judgment.
Appeal	A request made to a higher court to review and potentially overturn the decision of a lower court.	An Appeal is not a new trial; it is a review of the legal process.

How to Use This Glossary

- **Refer to it when reading court documents:** Court forms and letters from the opposing party often use technical language. Use this guide to quickly understand the meaning of terms like *summons*, *discovery*, or *stipulation*.
 - **Keep it handy during preparation:** When writing your own documents or preparing your case, use the simple definitions to ensure you are using the correct legal terminology.
-

Important Notice:

The information provided in this guide is for educational purposes only. We do not provide legal advice, legal interpretation, or attorney services, and we cannot represent anyone in court. Our goal is to help you learn, understand, and feel confident when navigating legal topics.
