

Parties:

Plaintiff: The party who brings a civil suit in a court of law.

Defendant: A person sued in a civil proceeding or accused in a criminal proceeding. John Doe defendant. An anonymous defendant labeled “John Doe” because the plaintiff does not, at the time of filing suit, know the person's name. John Doe defendants are common in several situations, such as police-brutality lawsuits in which the plaintiff does not know the names of the officers allegedly at fault.

Appellant: A party who appeals a lower court's decision, usu. seeking reversal of that decision. Also known as petitioner.

Appellee: A party against whom an appeal is taken and whose role is to respond to that appeal, usually seeking affirmance of the lower court's decision. Also known as respondent.

Moving Party: One who makes a motion to court or a deliberative body.

Trier of fact (fact finder): One or more persons, such as jurors in a trial or administrative-law judges in a hearing, who hear testimony and review evidence to rule on a factual issue.

Bench trial: A trial before a judge without a jury. The judge decides questions of fact as well as questions of law. Also termed nonjury trial.

Decisions:

Guilty: Having committed a crime; responsible for a crime.

Not guilty: A defendant's plea denying the crime charged. A jury verdict acquitting the defendant because the prosecution failed to prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Innocent: Free from guilt; free from legal fault.

Reversed: The decision by a lower court is changed from guilty to not guilty, liable to not liable.

Remanded: The decision by an appellate court to return the legal matter to the trial court for further clarification or action.

Found (judgment) for the defendant (plaintiff): The decision in a civil matter that finds the defendant liable (judgment for the plaintiff) or not liable (judgment for the defendant).

Demurrer: A pleading stating that although the facts alleged in a complaint may be true, they are insufficient for the plaintiff to state a claim for relief and for the defendant to frame an answer. In most jurisdictions, such a pleading is now termed a motion to dismiss, but the demurrer is still used in a few states, including California

Sustained: Where a court agrees with a party or lower court decision.

Overruled: Where a court disagrees with a party or lower court decision.