

American Court Systems Flow Chart

Top Level: Courts of Last Resort on Appeal

U.S. Supreme Court

The U. S. Supreme Court is free to accept or reject the cases it will hear. It must, however, hear certain rare mandatory appeals and cases within its original jurisdiction as specified by the Constitution.

State Supreme Courts of Appeal

Called the State Supreme Court in almost all states. It's the final court of appeal for all but a small number of state cases. If a case involves a right protected by the U.S. Constitution, a party may appeal to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Intermediate Courts of Appeal

State Intermediate Courts of Appeal

40 states have ICAs. These courts are the first court of appeals for most state cases. In 10 states the state Supreme Court is the only court of appeals.

U. S. Circuit Courts of Appeal

There are 12 of these courts. Each state and U.S. District Court is in one of the 12 circuits. Each court reviews cases from the U. S. District Courts in its Circuit. Appeals go to the U.S. Supreme Court.

U. S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

This court reviews civil appeals dealing with minor claims against the U.S. government; appeals in patent-right cases and cases involving international trade disputes.

Base Level: Trial Courts

State Trial Courts

Almost all cases involving state civil and criminal laws are initially filed in state or local trial courts. They are typically called Municipal, County, District, Circuit, or Superior Courts. In Oregon, they are called "Circuit Courts"; there is one in each county.

Appeals from the state trial court Usually go to the state intermediate court of appeals.

About 95% of all court cases in the U.S. are decided by state courts.

U. S. District Courts

There are 94 federal district courts, which handle criminal and civil cases involving:

- Federal statutes
- The U.S. constitution
- Civil cases between citizens from different states and the amount of money at stake is more than \$75,000. (This is the most common type of Case in the US District Court.)

Most appeals from here go to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals; some go to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

U. S. Court of International Trade

Specializes in cases that involve international trade. Appeals go to the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (CAFC)

U. S Claims Court

For federal cases involving amounts over \$10,000, conflicts from Indian Claims Commission and cases involving some government contractors. Appeals go to the CAFC.