



Crime and punishment

Lesson code: 12B2-M118-XSLR

Upper-intermediate (B2-C1)

American English

1 Classify the crimes

In pairs, discuss which crimes are serious and which are petty:

arson
drunk driving
murder

bribery
fraud
pickpocketing

burglary
hacking
robbery

drug dealing
kidnapping
shoplifting

drug possession
manslaughter
terrorism

Serious crimes: _____

Petty crimes: _____

Can you think of any other crimes to add to the lists?

2 Criminals

Look at the table below. Complete the sentences on the next page with appropriate words from the table in their correct form.

Crime	Criminal	What does he do?
burglary	a burglar	steals from houses
pickpocketing	a pickpocket	pickpockets people
arson	an arsonist	sets buildings on fire
robbery	a robber	robs people or places
mugging	a mugger	mugs people
blackmail	a blackmailer	blackmails people
kidnapping	a kidnapper	kidnaps people
perjury	a perjurer	lies in court
fraud	a fraudster	deceives people
smuggling	a smuggler	smuggles illegal goods



1. Dan was caught trying to _____ cocaine into the country. He is currently serving a 5-year prison sentence.
2. This town is getting really dangerous. Yesterday, I was _____ in broad daylight. The attacker had a knife and took all my money.
3. The police are looking for the person responsible for burning down the church. They are confident they will catch the _____.
4. Hold on to your wallet. There are a lot of _____ on the train.
5. Joe was _____ on his way to work. The _____ contacted his wife and demanded a ransom of \$1 million.
6. James was found guilty of _____. It was obvious that he was lying under oath.
7. A _____ broke into my house while I was at work and stole my entire music collection.
8. Do not try to hide your true income from the government. Tax _____ is a very serious crime.
9. Sandra is trying to _____ Tom. She says he has to pay her \$1000 or she will tell his wife about his affair.

3 Punishments

Look at the list of punishments below. In pairs, put them in order from 1 (most lenient) to 6 (most severe):

a 5-year prison sentence
community service

a \$500 fine
life imprisonment

a warning
the death penalty

In pairs, discuss what punishments are normally given in your countries for people who are found guilty of the crimes on Page 1. For example:

"If you are found guilty of murder, the punishment is usually life imprisonment." / "If you are caught smuggling illegal drugs, you can get a 10-year prison sentence."

4 In court

What do people do in a court of law? Study the following definitions:

plead guilty/not guilty - to officially state that you are guilty/not guilty of a crime

sentence somebody - to officially give a punishment to a person who is found guilty of a crime

give testimony - to tell the court what you saw/know

reach a verdict - to arrive at a decision about whether a person is guilty or not guilty of a crime

acquit somebody - to officially decide that someone is not guilty of a crime

convict somebody - to officially decide that someone is guilty of a crime



In pairs, match the following people with their typical functions and activities in a court of law:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. a defense lawyer | a. argues that someone is guilty of committing a crime |
| 2. a defendant | b. gives testimony to the court |
| 3. a prosecutor | c. listens to arguments, hears evidence, deals with crimes that are not serious |
| 4. a judge | d. listens to arguments, hears evidence, sentences a guilty person |
| 5. a magistrate | e. listen to the facts/arguments, reach a verdict, convict/acquit someone who is charged with a serious crime |
| 6. a witness | f. pleads guilty/not guilty, gives testimony |
| 7. the jury | g. represents someone accused of a crime, argues that someone is not guilty of committing a crime |

Think about a well-known court case. Who was the defendant? What crime was he/she charged with? Did he/she plead guilty or not guilty? Who gave testimony? What was the verdict - did the jury acquit or convict the defendant? What sentence did the judge give?

5 Talking point

Discuss any of the following questions:

1. Have you ever given testimony in a court of law?
2. Is crime a problem in your hometown or country? What are the reasons for this?
3. Do you think sentencing a criminal to prison is always an effective punishment?

