

# 1 Basic legal terms



## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 People in the Legal System: Civil Cases

A civil case begins with a plaintiff. He or she has a **complaint** about the actions of another person or organization. The **plaintiff** files the complaint with a **court**.

The person or organization accused of a wrongdoing is the **defendant**. Both the plaintiff and the defendant usually have **attorneys**. The attorneys speak on behalf of their clients. A **paralegal**, a person with legal training, may assist the attorney.

In some cases, a **jury** listens to arguments for and against the defendant. Then they decide on a **verdict**. Finally, the **judge** makes a decision to resolve the complaint.

### Get ready!

1 Before you read the passage, talk about these questions.

- 1 What are some different jobs in the legal profession?
- 2 Which legal job would you prefer, and why?

### Reading

2 Read the text and complete the table using information from the text.

Person	Role or Job
1 _____	files a complaint
2 _____	is accused of a crime
attorneys	3 _____
Paralegal	4 _____
5 _____	resolves a complaint

### Vocabulary

3 Match the words (1-7) with the definitions (A-G).

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 __ verdict      | 5 __ paralegal |
| 2 __ legal system | 6 __ plaintiff |
| 3 __ court        | 7 __ civil     |
| 4 __ complaint    |                |

- A the methods of interpreting laws and putting them into effect
- B a legal conclusion
- C a written document that states the reason for legal action
- D the place where people go to conduct legal business
- E a person who accuses another person of a wrongdoing
- F an attorney's assistant with specialized legal training
- G occurring between citizens

4 Check (✓) the sentence that uses the underlined parts correctly.

- 1 — A The plaintiff delivered a verdict at the end of the trial.  
— B The judge listened to the attorneys' arguments.
- 2 — A Twelve paralegals determined the outcome of the case.  
— B The jury decided that the man was not guilty.
- 3 — A The defendant hired an attorney to prove that he was innocent.  
— B In court, the plaintiff always makes the final decision.
- 4 — A Mr. Meaner's attorney represented him during the trial.  
— B What verdict is the defendant accused of?

5 Listen and read the text again. Use the words in the photographs to present the people in the legal system.

## Listening

6 Listen to a conversation between two attorneys. Choose the correct answers.

- 1 What is the conversation mostly about?  
A the creation of a complaint  
B an attorney's advice to a defendant  
C a plaintiff's reaction to a verdict  
D the progress of a civil case
- 2 Why is the man worried?  
A The complaint is not true.  
B The jury already decided.  
C The defendant is guilty.  
D The plaintiff has no proof.

7 Listen again and complete the conversation.

Attorney 1: Hi, Robert. How is that 1 \_\_\_\_\_ case going?  
Attorney 2: Hey, Janet. It's not going all that well, actually.  
Attorney 1: Oh? What's wrong?  
Attorney 2: The defendant's 2 \_\_\_\_\_ is pretty good. He's making our 3 \_\_\_\_\_ seem weak.  
Attorney 1: Well, it's not, is it?  
Attorney 2: No, the 4 \_\_\_\_\_ owes my client thousands of dollars. But that's based on a verbal agreement.  
Attorney 1: I see. So the 5 \_\_\_\_\_ has nothing in writing?  
Attorney 2: Exactly. I'm worried that the 6 \_\_\_\_\_ will decide against us.

## Speaking

8 With a partner, act out the roles below based on Task 7. Then, switch roles.

USE LANGUAGE SUCH AS:

*How is that ... going?*

*What's wrong?*

*I'm concerned that the ...*

Student A: You are an attorney. Talk to another attorney about a civil case. Ask Student B about:

- the case
- the complaint
- the problem

Student B: You are an attorney representing a client in a civil case. Answer Student A's questions.

## Writing

9 Use the conversation from Task 8 to fill out an update on the attorney's case.

### Civil Case Update

Attorney: \_\_\_\_\_

Plaintiff's Complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible Outcome: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

