

Glossary of Terms

A

acquit	To find a defendant not guilty in a criminal trial.
action	Proceeding taken in a court of law. Synonymous with case, suit, lawsuit.
adjudication	A judgment or decree. 1. One who administers the estate of a person who dies without leaving a will.
Administrator	2. A court official.
advance sheets	Initial, temporary publications of decisions of Washington's appellate courts. Advanced sheets are published weekly.
adversary system	Basic U.S. trial system in which each of the opposing parties has an opportunity to state his or her viewpoint before the court. Plaintiff argues for defendant's guilt (criminal) or liability (civil). Defense argues for defendant's innocence (criminal) or against liability (civil).
affidavit	A written or printed declaration or statement under oath. See certificate under penalty of perjury of perjury.
affidavit of prejudice	A written motion by a party to a judge, requesting that the judge not hear the case.
affirm	The assertion of an appellate court that the judgment of the lower court is correct and should stand.
allegation	An assertion, declaration or statement of a party to an action made in a pleading, stating what the party expects to prove.
alleged	(allegation) Stated; recited; claimed; asserted; charged.
answer	A formal response to a claim, admitting or denying the allegations in the claim.
appeal	Review of a case by a higher court.
appeal on the record	Refers to a review by a superior court of a district or municipal court decision, through an examination of the lower court's transcript, tape recording or other official documentation of the proceeding. 1. The formal proceeding by which a defendant submits to the jurisdiction of the court. 2. A written notification to the plaintiff by an attorney stating that he or she is representing the defendant.
appearance	
appellant	Party appealing a decision or judgment to a higher court.
appellate court	A court having jurisdiction over appeal and review.
appellee	The party against whom an appeal is taken. See respondent.
arbitration	The hearing and settlement of a dispute between opposing parties by a third party whose decision the parties have agreed to accept.
arraignment	In criminal cases, a court hearing where a defendant is advised of the charges and asked to plead guilty or not guilty. The time in a lawsuit when the complaining party has stated a claim, the other side has responded with a denial and the matter is ready to be tried.
at issue	
attachment	Taking a person's property to satisfy a court-ordered debt.
attorney at law	A lawyer; one who is licensed to act as a representative for another in a legal matter or proceeding.
attorney of record	An attorney, named in the records of a case, who is responsible for handling the case on behalf of the party he or she represents.

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B

bail	An amount of money determined by the judge and posted with the court clerk as security.
bail bond	An agreement by a third party to pay a certain sum of money if the defendant fails to appear in court.
bailiff	A court employee who, among other things, maintains order in the courtroom and is responsible for custody of the jury.
bankruptcy	A legal proceeding where a person or business is relieved of paying certain debts.
bench warrant	Process issued by the court itself or "from the bench" for the attachment or arrest of a person.
best evidence	Primary evidence; the best evidence which is available; any evidence falling short of this standard is secondary; i.e., an original letter is best evidence compared to a copy.
brief	A legal document, prepared by an attorney, which presents the law and facts supporting his or her client's case.
burden of proof	Measure of proof required to prove a fact. Obligation of a party to prove facts at issue in the trial of a case.

C

calendar	List of cases arranged for hearing in court.
caption	The caption of a pleading, or other papers connected with a case in court, is the heading or introductory clause which shows the names of the parties, name of the court, number of the case, etc. Any proceeding, action, cause, lawsuit or controversy initiated through the court system by filing a complaint, petition, indictment or information.
case	
caseload	The number of cases a judge handles in a specific time period.
cause of action	A legal claim.
certificate under penalty of perjury	A written statement, certified by the maker as being under penalty of perjury. In many circumstances, it may be used in lieu of an affidavit. See affidavit.
certiorari	Procedure for removing a case from a lower court or administrative agency to a higher court for review.
challenge for cause	A request by a party that the court excuse a specific juror on the basis that the juror is biased.
chambers	A judge's private office.
change of venue	The removal of a case begun in one court, to another. See venue.
charge	Formal accusation of having committed a criminal offense.
chief judge	Presiding or administrative judge in a court.
chief justice	Presiding justice of the Supreme Court.
circumstantial evidence	All evidence of indirect nature; the process of decision by which judge or jury may reason from circumstances known or proved to establish by inference the principal fact.
citation	1. Summons to appear in court. 2. Reference to authorities in support of a legal argument.
civil law	All law that is not criminal law. Usually pertains to the settlement of disputes between individuals, organizations or groups and having to do with the establishment, recovery or redress of private and civil rights.
claim	The assertion of a right to money or property.

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clerk of court	An officer of a court whose principal duty is to maintain court records and preserve evidence presented during a trial.
closing argument	The closing statement, by counsel, to the trier of facts after all parties have concluded their presentation of evidence.
code	A collection, compendium or revision of laws systematically arranged into chapters, table of contents and index and promulgated by legislative authority.
commit	To lawfully send a person to prison, a reformatory or an asylum.
common law	The system of jurisprudence which is based on judicial precedent, rather than legislatively enacted statutes of law. Also called "case law."
community service	A sentencing alternative usually used in lieu of a monetary penalty or fine.
commutation	Change of punishment from a greater to a lesser degree, such as from death to life imprisonment or ending a sentence that has been partially served.
comparative negligence	Negligence of a plaintiff in a civil suit which decreases the recovery of damages by his or her percentage of negligence compared to a defendant's negligence.
competency	In the law of evidence, the presence of those characteristics which render a witness legally fit and qualified to give testimony.
complainant	One who makes a complaint. See plaintiff.
complaint	1. (criminal) Formal written charge that a person has committed a criminal offense. 2. (civil) Initial document entered by the plaintiff which states the claims against the defendant.
condemnation	The legal process by which real estate of a private owner is taken for public use without consent but upon the award and payment of just compensation.
contempt of court	Any act that is meant to embarrass, hinder or obstruct a court in the administration of justice. Direct contempt is committed in the presence of the court; indirect contempt is when a lawful order is not carried out or is refused.
contested hearing	A hearing held in courts of limited jurisdiction for the purpose of allowing a person to dispute the determination that an infraction has been committed. The person may subpoena and examine witnesses and present evidence. Such hearings are held without a jury.
continuance	Adjournment of the proceedings in a case from one day to another.
convict	1. To find a person guilty of a charge (verb). 2. One who has been found guilty of a crime or misdemeanor; usually refers to convicted felons or prisoners in penitentiaries (noun).
corpus delicti	The body or material substance upon which crime has been committed; e.g., the corpse of a murdered person, the charred remains of a burned house.
corroborating evidence	Evidence supplementary to that already given and tending to strengthen or confirm it.
costs	An allowance for expenses in prosecuting or defending a suit. Ordinarily does not include attorney's fees.
counterclaim	Claim presented by a defendant in opposition to, or deduction from, the claim of the plaintiff.

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county clerk	Elected official who is clerk of the superior court. See clerk of court.
court	1. Place where justice is administered. 2. Judge or judges sitting in the court administering justice.
court administrator	Manager of administrative, nonjudicial affairs of the court.
court commissioner	A judicial officer at both trial and appellate court levels who performs many of the same duties as judges and justices.
court of appeals	Intermediate appellate court to which most appeals are taken from superior court.
court reporter	Person who records and transcribes the verbatim testimony and all other oral statements made during court sessions.
court, district	Court of limited jurisdiction where civil cases up to \$50,000 and small claims cases up to \$2,500 can be heard. Criminal and gross misdemeanors and traffic citations are also heard in district court.
court, juvenile	Division of superior court that deals with the conduct and circumstances of children under the age of 18.
court, municipal	Court whose jurisdiction is confined to a city or local community. In Washington, jurisdiction is generally limited to criminal and traffic offenses arising from violation of local ordinances.
court, small claims	A division of state district court where parties can bring claims up to \$4,000. Procedures are simplified and lawyers are generally not allowed.
court, superior	State trial court of general jurisdiction. See general jurisdiction.
court, supreme	"Court of last resort." Highest court in the state and final appellate court.
courts of limited jurisdiction	Includes district and municipal courts.
crime	Conduct declared unlawful by a legislative body and for which there is a punishment of a jail or prison term, a fine, or both.
criminal insanity	Lack of mental capacity to do or abstain from doing a particular act; inability to distinguish right from wrong.
criminal law	Body of law pertaining to crimes against the state or conduct detrimental to society as a whole. Violation of criminal statutes are punishable by law.
cross-examination	The questioning of a witness by the party opposed to the one who produced the witness.
custody	Detaining of a person by lawful process or authority to assure that individual's appearance to any hearing; the jailing or imprisonment of a person convicted of a crime.
D	
damages	Compensation recovered in the courts by a person who has suffered loss, detriment or injury to his or her person, property or rights, through the unlawful act or negligence of another.
de novo	"Anew." A trial de novo is a completely new trial held as if the original trial in the court of limited jurisdiction had never taken place.
declaratory judgment	A judgment that declares the rights of the parties on a question of law. Decision or order of the court. A final decree completes the suit; an interlocutory decree is a provisional or preliminary decree which is not final.
decree	

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default	A failure of a party to respond in a timely manner to a pleading; a failure to appear for trial.
defendant	1. (criminal) Person charged with a crime. 2. (civil) Person against whom a civil action is brought.
defense attorney	The attorney who represents the defendant.
deferred sentence	See sentence, deferred. Sworn testimony taken and recorded in an authorized place outside of the courtroom, according to the rules of the court.
deposition	
determinate sentence	See sentence, determinate.
direct examination	The questioning of a witness by the party who produced the witness.
discovery	A pretrial proceeding where a party to an action may be informed about (or "discover") the facts known by other parties or witnesses.
dismissal with prejudice	Dismissal of a case by a judge which bars the losing party from raising the issue again in another lawsuit.
dismissal without prejudice	The losing party is permitted to sue again with the same cause of action. 1. Determination of a charge; termination of any legal action.
disposition	2. A sentence of a juvenile offender. The disagreement of one or more judges of a court with the decision of the majority.
dissent	
dissolution	Legal ending of a marriage. Formerly called divorce.
District and Municipal Court Judges' Association	Association of judges of courts of limited jurisdiction established by statute to study and make recommendations concerning the operation of the courts served by its members.
district court	See court, district.
divorce	See dissolution.
docket	Book containing entries of all proceedings in a court.
domicile	Place considered to be a person's permanent home.
double jeopardy	Prohibition against more than one prosecution for the same crime.
due process	Constitutional guarantee that an accused person receive a fair and impartial trial.
DUI	Driving under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs.
E	
eminent domain	The power to take private property for public use by condemnation. See condemnation.
en banc	"On the bench." All judges of a court sitting together to hear a case.
enjoin	To require a person to perform, or abstain or desist from some act. The act of officers or agents of a government in inducing a person to commit a crime not contemplated by the person, for the purpose of instituting a criminal prosecution against him or her.
entrapment	
et al	"And others."
evidence	Any form of proof legally presented at a trial through witnesses, records, documents, etc. See expert evidence. 1. A proceeding brought for the benefit of one party only, without notice to or challenge by an adverse party. 2. The department of the court which hears ex parte proceedings.
ex parte	

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exhibit	Paper, document or other object received by the court as evidence during a trial or hearing.
expert evidence	Testimony given by those qualified to speak with authority regarding scientific, technical or professional matters.
extradition	The surrender by one state to another of an individual accused or convicted of an offense outside its own territory and within the territorial jurisdiction of the other.
F	
fact-finding hearing	A proceeding where facts relevant to deciding a controversy are determined.
felony	A crime of graver nature than a gross misdemeanor.
fine	A sum of money imposed upon a convicted person as punishment for a criminal offense or infraction.
fraud	An intentional perversion of truth; deceitful practice or device resorted to with intent to deprive another of property or other right or in some manner to do injury to that person.
G	
garnishment	Proceeding whereby property, money or credits of a debtor in the possession of another are applied to the debts of the debtor, as in the garnishment of a person's wages.
general jurisdiction	Refers to courts that have no limit on the types of criminal and civil cases they may hear. Superior courts are courts of general jurisdiction.
grand jury	A body of persons sworn to inquire into crime and, if appropriate, bring accusations (indictments) against the suspected criminals. Not generally used in Washington.
gross misdemeanor	See misdemeanor.
guardian ad litem	A person appointed by a court to manage the interests of a minor or incompetent person whose property is involved in litigation.
H	
habeas corpus	"You have the body." A writ of habeas corpus requires a person be brought before a judge. It is usually used to direct an official to produce a prisoner so that the court may determine if such person has been denied his or her liberty without due process.
hearing	An in-court proceeding before a judge, generally open to the public.
hearsay	Evidence based on what the witness has heard someone else say, rather than what the witness has personally experienced or observed.
hung jury	A jury whose members cannot agree on a verdict.
hypothetical question	A combination of facts and circumstances, assumed or proved, stated in such a form as to constitute a coherent statement of facts upon which the opinion of an expert can be asked by way of evidence in a trial.
I	
immunity	Freedom from duty or penalty.
impeachment of a witness	An attack on the credibility of a witness by the testimony of other witnesses.
inadmissible	That which, under the established rules of evidence, cannot be admitted or received.

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indictment	Written accusation of a grand jury, charging that a person or business has committed a crime.
indigent	Needy; poor; impoverished. A defendant who can demonstrate his or her indigence to the court may be assigned a court-appointed attorney at public expense.
information	An accusation of some criminal offense, in the nature of an indictment, but which is presented by a competent public officer instead of a grand jury.
infraction	An act which is prohibited by law but which is not legally defined as a crime. In Washington State, many traffic violations are classified as infractions.
injunction	Writ or order by a court prohibiting a specific action from being carried out by a person or group.
instruction	Direction given by a judge to the jury regarding the applicable law in a given case.
interrogatories	Written questions developed by one party's attorney for the opposing party. Interrogatories must be answered under oath within a specific period of time.
intervention	Proceeding in a suit where a third person is allowed, with the court's permission, to join the suit as a party.
J	
judge	An elected or appointed public official with authority to hear and decide cases in a court of law.
judge, pro tem	Temporary judge.
judgment	Final determination by a court of the rights and claims of the parties in an action.
jurisdiction	Authority of a court to exercise judicial power.
jurisprudence	The science of law.
juror	Member of a jury.
jury	Specific number of people (usually 6 or 12), selected as prescribed by law to render a decision (verdict) in a trial. See trier of facts.
juvenile court	See court, juvenile.
L	
law	The combination of those rules and principles of conduct promulgated by legislative authority, derived from court decisions and established by local custom.
law clerks	Persons trained in the law who assist judges in researching legal opinions.
leading question	One which suggests to a witness the answer desired. Generally prohibited on direct examination.
limited jurisdiction	Refers to courts that are limited in the types of criminal and civil cases they may hear. District, municipal and traffic violation bureaus are courts of limited jurisdiction.
litigant	One who is engaged in a lawsuit.
litigation	Contest in court; a law suit.
M	
magistrate	Court official with limited authority.
mandate	Command from a court directing the enforcement of a judgment, sentence or decree.

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mandatory arbitration	The hearing and settlement of a dispute, involving a money judgment of \$50,000 or less, by a third party whose decision is binding on the parties. Criminal offenses less than felonies; generally those punishable by fine or imprisonment of less than 90 days in a local facility. A gross
misdemeanor	misdemeanor is a criminal offense for which an adult could be sent to jail for up to one year, pay a fine up to \$5,000 or both.
mistrial	Erroneous or invalid trial. Usually declared because of prejudicial error in the proceedings or when there was a hung jury.
mitigating circumstances	Those which do not constitute a justification or excuse for an offense but which may be considered as reasons for reducing the degree of blame. A hearing held in courts of limited jurisdiction for the purpose of allowing a person to explain the circumstances surrounding his or her commission of an infraction. The determination that an infraction has been committed may not be contested.
mitigation hearing	In the appellate process, to change the terms of, rather than revise, a judgment of a trial court, administrative agency or intermediate appellate court.
modify	
monetary penalty	A penalty levied against a person convicted of a traffic infraction.
moot	Previously decided or settled, but lacking legal authority. A moot point is one not settled by judicial decisions.
motion	Oral or written request made by a party to an action before, during or after a trial upon which a court issues a ruling or order.
municipal courts	See courts, municipal.
N	
negligence	The absence of ordinary care.
O	
oath	Written or oral pledge by a person to keep a promise or speak the truth.
objection	Statement by an attorney taking exception to testimony or the attempted admission of evidence and opposing its consideration as evidence.
of counsel	Phrase used to identify attorneys that are employed by a party to assist in the preparation and management of a case but who are not the principal attorneys of record in the case. 1. A person who has committed a felony, as established by state law, and is 18 years of age or older. 2. A person who is less than 18 but whose felony case has been transferred by the juvenile court to a criminal court.
offender	A pretrial hearing normally scheduled at the same time the trial date is established. Purpose of the hearing is to ensure each party receives (or "discovers") vital information concerning the case held by the other. In addition, the judge may rule on the scope of discovery or on the admissibility of challenged evidence.
omnibus hearing	The initial statement made by attorneys for each side, outlining the facts each intends to establish during the trial.
opening statement	Statement of decision by a judge or court regarding a case tried before it. Published opinions are printed because they contain new legal interpretations. Unpublished opinions, based on legal precedent, are not printed.
opinion	

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opinion, per curiam	Phrase used to distinguish an opinion of the whole court from an opinion written by only one judge.
overrule	1. Court's denial of any motion or point raised to the court. 2. To overturn or void a decision made in a prior case.
P	
parties	Persons, corporations, or associations who have commenced a lawsuit or who are defendants.
penalty assessment	An assessment or fee added to a monetary penalty or fine. Such fees are earmarked for the support of specific state programs such as traffic safety, criminal justice training, etc.
peremptory challenge	Procedure which parties in an action may use to reject prospective jurors without giving a reason. Each side is allowed a limited number of such challenges.
perjury	Making intentionally false statements under oath. Perjury is a criminal offense.
personal recognizance	In criminal proceedings, the pretrial release of a defendant without bail upon the defendant's promise to return to court.
petition	Written application to a court requesting a remedy available under law.
petition for review	A document filed in the state Supreme Court asking for a review of a decision made by the Court of Appeals.
petitioner	See plaintiff.
plaintiff	The party who begins an action; the party who complains or sues in an action and is named as such in the court's records. Also called a petitioner.
plea	A criminal defendant's official statement of "guilty" or "not guilty" to the charge.
plea bargaining	In a criminal case, the process in which the accused and the prosecutor negotiate a mutually satisfactory disposition of the case. Such bargains are not binding on the court.
pleadings	Formal, written allegations by the parties of their respective claims.
polling the jury	A practice whereby the jurors are asked individually whether they agreed, and still agree, with the verdict.
power of attorney	Document authorizing another to act as one's agent or attorney in fact (Not an attorney at law).
precedent	Previously decided case which is recognized as an authority for determining future cases.
preponderance of evidence	The general standard of proof in civil cases. The weight of evidence presented by one side is more convincing to the trier of facts than the evidence presented by the opposing side.
presentence report	A report to the sentencing judge containing background information about the crime and the defendant to assist the judge in making his or her sentencing decision.
presiding judge	Chief or administrative judge of a court. See chief judge.
pro tem	"Temporary." See judge, pro tem.
probable cause	Reasonable cause; having more evidence for than against; a reasonable belief that a crime has or is being committed; the basis for all lawful searches, seizures, and arrests.
probate	The legal process of establishing the validity of a will and settling an estate.

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probation	Set of conditions and regulations under which a person found guilty of a criminal offense is allowed to remain in the community, usually under the supervision of a probation officer.
proceeding	Any hearing or court appearance related to the adjudication of a case.
prosecution	1. Act of pursuing a lawsuit or criminal trial. 2. The State of Washington, the party that initiates a criminal case. The public officer in each county who is a lawyer and who represents the interests of the state in criminal trials and the county in all legal matters involving the county. In criminal cases, the prosecutor has the responsibility of deciding who and when to prosecute. Also known as prosecuting attorney.
prosecutor	
R	
reasonable doubt	It, in the minds of the jury, a doubt exists which may have arisen from the evidence, or lack of evidence, a doubt that would exist in the mind of a reasonable person after fully, fairly, and carefully considering all of the evidence, or lack of evidence. The introduction of contradicting or opposing evidence showing what a witness said is not true; the stage of a trial at which such evidence may be introduced.
rebuttal	1. To preserve in writing, print or by film, tape, etc. 2. History of a case. 3. The word-for-word (verbatim) written or tape-recorded account of all proceedings of a trial. See transcript.
record	The portion of the record of a lower court necessary to allow a higher court to review the case.
record on appeal	Follows cross-examination and is carried out by the party who first examined the witness.
redirect examination	To send back. A disposition by an appellate court that results in sending the case back to the original court from which it came for further proceedings.
remand	
reply	Pleading by the plaintiff in response to the defendant's written answer.
respondent	1. Party against whom an appeal is brought in an appellate court; the prevailing party in the trial court case. 2. A juvenile offender.
restitution	Act of giving the equivalent for any loss, damage or injury.
rests the case	When a party's presentation of evidence is concluded.
reversal	Setting aside, annulling, vacating, or changing to the contrary, the decision of a lower court or other body.
S	
search and seizure, unreasonable	In general, an examination without authority of law, of one's premises or person for the purpose of discovering stolen or illegal property or some other evidence of guilt to be used in prosecuting a crime. A written order, issued by a judge or magistrate in the name of the state, directing an officer to search a specified house or other place for stolen property, drugs, or contraband. Usually required as a condition for a legal search and seizure.
search warrant	Judgment formally pronounced by a judge upon a defendant following conviction in a criminal prosecution.
sentence	Two or more sentences which run at the same time.
sentence, concurrent	Two or more sentences which run one after another.
sentence, consecutive	

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sentence, deferred	An alternative to a prison sentence consisting of probation, jail, or other appropriate condition.
sentence, determinate	A sentence that states exactly the number of actual years, months or days of total confinement, partial confinement or community supervision or the number of actual hours or days of community service work or dollars or terms of a fine or restitution. The fact an offender can, through "earned early release", reduce the actual period of confinement, does not affect the classification of the sentence as a determinate sentence. Execution of the sentence has been withheld by the court based on certain terms and conditions.
sentence, suspended	Recessing the jury for meals.
separation (jury)	Delivery of a legal document to the opposite party.
service	Annul or void as in "setting aside" a judgment.
set aside	1. Conclusion of a legal matter. 2. Compromise agreement by opposing parties in a civil suit before judgment is made, eliminating the need for the judge to resolve the controversy.
settlement	A meeting between parties of a lawsuit, their counsel and a judge to attempt a resolution of the dispute
settlement conference	See court, small claims.
small claims	Right of a defendant to be tried promptly.
speedy trial	A law created by the Legislature.
statute	Law which specifies the time within which parties must take judicial action to enforce their rights.
statute of limitations	Halting of a judicial proceeding by order of the court.
stay	Agreement by the attorneys and parties on opposite sides of a case regarding any matter in the trial proceedings.
stipulation	Document issued by the authority of the court to compel a witness to appear and give testimony or produce documentary evidence in a proceeding. Failure to appear or produce is punishable by contempt of court.
subpoena	"Bring the document with you." A process by which the court commands a witness to produce specific documents or records in a trial.
subpoena duces tecum	Any court proceeding in which an individual seeks a decision. See case. Document or writ directing the sheriff or other officer to notify a person that an action has been commenced against him or her in court and that he or she is required to appear, on a certain day, and answer the complaint in such action.
suit	Association of judges of Washington's courts of general jurisdiction established by statute to study and make recommendations concerning the administration of justice in the courts served by its members.
summons	See sentence, suspended.

T

testimony	Any statement made by a witness under oath in a legal proceeding.
tort	An injury or wrong committed, with or without force, to the person or property of another, which gives rise to a claim for damages.

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transcript

The official record of proceedings in a trial or hearing, which is kept by the court reporter.

trial

The presentation of evidence in court to a trier of fact who applies the applicable law to those facts and then decides the case.

trial de novo

[See de novo.](#)

trier of facts

The jury or, in a non-jury trial, the judge.

V

venue

The specific county, city or geographical area in which a court has jurisdiction. See change of venue.

verdict

Formal decision made by a judge or jury (trier of facts). (pronounced "vwar-deer") - "To speak the truth." The process of preliminary examination of prospective jurors, by the court or attorneys, regarding their qualifications.

voir dire

W

Washington Appellate Reports

Bound volumes that contain printed decisions of the state's Court of Appeals.

Washington Reports

Bound volumes that contain printed decisions of the Washington State Supreme Court.

Washington State Bar Association

A state wide association of attorneys organized under rules of the Washington State Supreme Court to administer bar examinations, conduct a mandatory legal education program for attorneys and perform disciplinary functions in those cases where it appears an attorney may have violated rules of the Attorney's Code of Professional Conduct. More than 20,500 active members belong to the association (1997).

willful act

An intentional act carried out without justifiable cause.

witness

Person who testifies under oath before a court, regarding what he or she has seen, heard or otherwise observed.

writ

A special, written court order directing a person to perform, or refrain from performing, a specific act.