

US Supreme Court

Top: Made up of 9 judges known as the Chief Justice and 8 associate justices. They are appointed for life by the President with the approval of the Senate. The Supreme Court has both original and appellate jurisdiction but most cases they deal with are on appeal. This is the last stop for cases.

US Circuit Court of Appeals

Middle: If you lose your case in US District Court you have the right to appeal and have your case heard again by a panel of judges who determine if mistakes were made in your original trial. They only have appellate jurisdiction.

US District Court

Lowest: These are the trial courts where federal cases are heard for the first time. Trial courts are the kind we are familiar with from watching TV. They have judges, juries, witnesses and all the things we expect to see. They have original jurisdiction.