

View-Point: Federal Courts

Federal Courts of the United States

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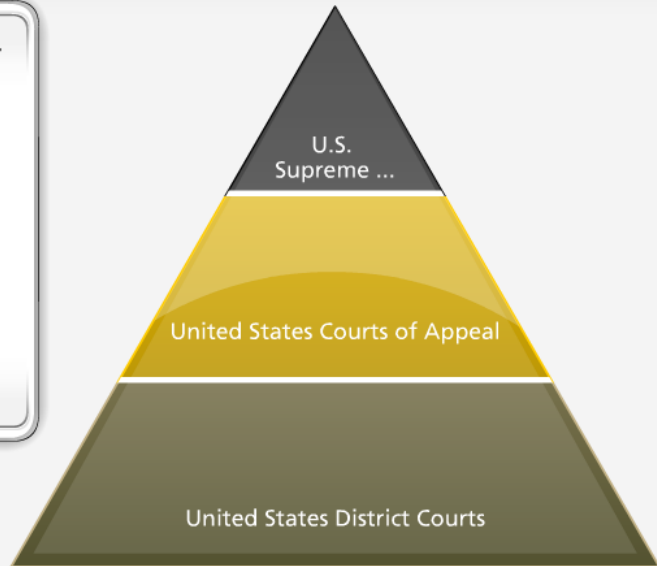
There are three basic courts in the U.S. judicial system:

The United States Supreme Court
Highest appellate level court.

The United States Courts of Appeal
Intermediate appellate level court.

The United States District Court
Federal trial court.

Click on each level court for more information.



U.S. Supreme Court

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U.S. Supreme Court

The Highest Court
The U.S. Supreme Court is the court of last resort.

It is comprised of nine judges (8 *Associate Justices* and 1 *Chief Justice*).

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United States Courts of Appeal

The Intermediate Appellate Court

The U.S. Courts of Appeal, often referred to as the Circuit Court of Appeals, is one of the two appellate level court in the U.S. court system. (The other is the U.S. Supreme Court.) The U.S. Courts of Appeal has **13 Circuits**. 11 are geographical, and are numbered 1 through 11. There is also the *D.C. Circuit Court* and the *Federal Circuit Court*.

If a party loses at the U.S. Courts of Appeal, he or she may file a Writ of Certiorari, requesting that the U.S. Supreme Court review the matter.

United States District Courts

The Trial Courts

The U.S. District Courts are where federal litigation begins. (Often called the court of original jurisdiction.) A federal trial will include a single judge and often a jury. U.S. District Court judges are appointed by the President, and they serve for life, or until they retire. This, in theory, frees them from political considerations in reaching their decisions.

If a party loses at the U.S. District Court level, he or she may appeal to the appropriate Circuit for the U.S. Courts of Appeal.

