

Legal Terminology

Adjournment Motion	A motion moved by a member in a legislature when it is desired to draw the attention of the executive to a matter of urgent public importance or interest.
Adult Suffrage	Is the right of voting in political elections granted to every adult person male or female without distinction of caste, creed, colour, holding of any property or qualification, etc.
Alibi	The plea that the person charged with a crime was somewhere else when the crime was committed.
Abet	To encourage someone to commit a crime
Abeyance	This law is a in abeyance.
Abrogate	To end.
Affirm	To state that you will tell the truth, but without swearing an oath.
Affray	Public fight, which frightens other people
Amnesty	Often for political crimes, given to several people at a same time.
Anarchy	Absence of law and order, because the government has lost control or because there is no government.
Ante	Which has taken place earlier or before.
Appellant	Person who appeals or who goes to a higher court to ask it to change a decision or a sentence imposed by a lower court.
Apportion	To share out in proportion.
Assignment	Legal transfer of a property or of a right.
Attachment	Holding a debtor's property to prevent it from being sold until debts are paid
Attest	To sing in the presence of a witness who also sings as evidence that the signature is real.
Attorn	To transfer
Autopsy	Examination of a dead person to see what was the cause of death.
Aver	To make a statement or an allegation in pleadings
Award	Decision, which settles a dispute.
Bicameral	Having or consisting of two legislative chambers
Bye Laws	Are special rules and regulations made by any company or corporation for carrying on its affairs, but they must neither contrivance the powers conferred by the Parliament nor the laws of the land.

Bail	Releasing an arrested person from custody after payment has been made to a court as guarantee that the person will return to face trial.
Bailment	Transfer of goods by someone (the bailor) to someone (the bailee) who then holds them until they have to be returned to the bailor (as when leaving a coat in a cloakroom or at the cleaner's)
Bailiff	GB person employed by the court, whose responsibility is to see that documents are served.
Bankrupt	Who has been declared by a court not to be capable of paying his debts and whose affairs are put into the hands of a trustee.
Beneficiary	Person who is left property in a will
Bicameral	Which has two chambers or houses
Bigamy	Notifiable offence of going through a ceremony of marriage to someone when you are still marriage to someone else.
Blasphemy	The crime of ridiculing or denying God or a religion in a scandalous way.
Bona fides	Good faith or in good faith.
Borough	Town, which has been incorporated, borough council = representatives elected to run a borough
Borstal	Center where a young offender was sent for training if he had committed a crime, which would normally be punishable by a prison sentence.
Bourgeois	Middle class or referring to the class of businessmen and professional people
Breach	Failure to carry out the terms of an agreement
Breath test	Test where a person's breath is sampled to establish the amount of alcohol he has drunk
Brief	Details of a client's case prepared by his solicitor and given to the barrister who is going to argue the case in court
Burden of Proof	Duty to prove that something which has been alleged in court is True.
Censure Motion	Means a motion of no-confidence in a government or a group of power.
Copy right	The exclusive right of an author in his literary or artistic work,. It is vested in the author for a period of sixty years.
Court martial	A court of military or naval officers to try persons for breach of military discipline according to military law.
Caveat	Warning.
Caveat emptor	Let the buyer beware

Citation	Quotation of a legal case
Clemency	Pardon of mercy
Coalition	Group of two or more political parties who come together to form a government
Codicil	Document executed in the same way as a will, making additions or changes to an existing will.
Coercion	Forcing someone by pressure to commit a crime or do some act.
Conciliation	Bringing together the parties in a dispute so that the dispute can be settled
Condominium	Rule of a colony or protected territory by two or more countries together.
Condone	To forgive
Conjugal	Referring to marriage
Consortium	Group of different companies which work together on one project.
Contingency	Possible state of emergency when decisions will have to be taken quickly
Conversion	Tort of dealing with a person's property in a way which is not consistent with that person's rights over it.
Corroborate	To prove evidence which has already been given
Counterfeit	False or imitation
Countermand	To countermand an order = to say that an order must not be carried out.
Coup	Rapid change of government which removes one government by force and replaces it by another
Covenant	Agreement or undertaking to do something or not to do something.
Curriculum vitae	Summary of a person's life story showing details of calculation and work experience.
Decree	The award or decision of a court or arbitrator
Deed	Legal document which has been signed sealed and delivered by the person making it.
Defamation	Act of injuring someone's reputation by maliciously saying or writing things about him.
Defeasance	Clause which says that a contract or bond
Defraud	To trick someone so as to obtain money illegally
Delegate	Person who is elected by others to put their case at a meeting

Delinquency	The act of committing crime, usually minor crime
Demagogue	Leader who is able to get the support of the people by exciting their feelings and prejudices
Deponent	Person who makes a statement under oath or by affidavit.
Depose	To state under oath
Detinue	Tort of wrongfully holding goods which belong to someone else.
Dictum	Saying or statement made by a judge
Digest	Book which collects summaries of court decisions together, used for reference purposes by lawyers
Discharge	Ending of a contract by performing all the conditions of the contract.
Dishonor	To refuse to pay a cheque
Earnest	Money paid as a down payment to show one's serious intention to proceed with a contract
Easement	Right which someone has to use land belonging to someone else, such as for a path
Embezzle	To use illegally.
Executor	Someone who is appointed by a person making his will who will see that the terms of the will are carried out.
Expunge	To remove
Extort	To get money or promises or a confession from someone.
Extradite	To bring an arrested person from another country to your country because he is wanted for trial for a crime which he committed in your country
Fiduciary	Acting as trustee for someone else or being in a possible of trust.
Freehold	Absolute right to hold land.
Genocide	The willful extermination of a minority or a religious community or race by mass killing or by passing repressive measures.
Gratuitous	Free or with no money being offered.
Hire purchase	System of buying something by paying a sum regularly each month until you own it completely.
Holograph	Document written by hand holograph will.
Homicide	Killing of a person
Horse-trading	Bargaining between political parties or politicians or members of a committee to obtain a general agreement for something
House of lords	Upper House of the British Parliament made up of hereditary lords, life peers, leading judges and bishops. House Judicial

	Committee of the House of Lords = Highest court of appeal in both civil and criminal cases in England and Wales.
House of Representative	Lower house of the congress of the United States, made up of 435 elected members.
Hypothecation	Using property such as securities as collateral for a loan, but not transferring legal ownership to the lender.
In camera	In private, with no members of the public permitted to be present
Incorporeal	Which is not physical or which cannot be touched.
Indemnity	Statement of liability to pay compensation for a loss or for a wrong in a transaction to which you are a party.
Indictment	Written statement of the details of the crime with which someone is charged in the crown court
Infringe	To break a law or a right
Injunction	Court order compelling someone to stop doing something or not to do something
Interim	Temporary or not final
Interlocutory	Temporary or provisional or happening at a court hearing which takes place before full trial
Intestate	To dies without making out a will
Impeachment	It means accusing a high official like President of India, Supreme Court Judge, etc. of disloyalty to the country and corruption and tying him in the Parliament according to a procedure set by law.
Jeopardy	To be in jeopardy = to be in danger of punishment or of harm
Jetsam	Cargo, which is thrown off a sinking ship
Jurisprudence	Study of the law and the legal system
Jurist	Person who has specialized in the study and practice of law.
Juror	Member of a jury
Jury	Group of twelve citizens who are sworn to decide whether someone is guilty or not guilty on the basis of the evidence they hear in court.
Jus	Law or right
Kickback	Illegal commission paid to someone who helps in a business deal
Letters Patent	A document under seal of the government authorizing an individual or body to do some act or enjoy some privilege
Laissez – faire	Political theory where a government does nothing to control the Economy

Larceny	Crime of stealing goods which belong to another person.
Launder	To transfer illegal or stolen money into an ordinary bank account, usually by a complex process to avoid detection
Libel	Written and published or broadcast statement which damages someone's character
Lien	Legal right to hold someone's goods and keep them until a debt has been paid
Lieu	Instead of
Lockout	Exclusion of employees by their employer from their place of work until certain terms are agreed to
Mandamus	We command
Magna Carta	The great Charter of England, granted by King John is called Magna Carta. "It provides that" no man, shall be taken or imprisoned nor will he pass upon him or condemn him but by lawful judgment.
Matricide	Murder of one's mother.
Moot case	Legal case to be discussed on its own, to establish a precedent.
Next friend	Person who brings an action on behalf of a minor
Notary public	Lawyer who has the authority to witness and draw up certain documents, and so make them official
Novation	Transaction in which a new contract is agreed by all parties to replace an existing contract.
Ombudsman	An official who investigates complaints by the public against government departments.
Perjury	Making false statement on oath
Proxy	One who acts for another
Palimony	Money which a court orders a man to pay regularly to a woman with whom he has been living and from whom he has separated.
Pilfer	To steal small objects or small amounts of money
Plagiarism	Copying the text of a work created by someone else and passing it off as your own.
Plaintiff	Person who starts an action against someone in the civil courts
Plea bargaining	Arrangement where the accused pleads guilty to some charges and the prosecutions drop other charges.
Pluralism	System allowing different political
Polygraph	Lie detector, a machine, which tells if a person is lying by recording physiological changes which take place while the person is being interviewed.
Power of	Official power which gives someone the right to act on

attorney	someone's behalf in legal matters.
Preamble	First words in an official document
Precedent	Something which has happened earlier than the present, and which can be a guide as to what should be done in the present case.
Preclude	To forbid or to prevent
Pre-emption	Right to first refusal to purchase something before it is sold to someone else.
Prerogative	Special right, which someone has.
Probate	Legal acceptance that a document, especially a will, is valid.
Prorate	At a rate, which changes according to the importance of something
Prorogation	End of a session of parliament
Prosecute	To bring to court to answer a criminal charge.
Prueview	General scope of an act of parliament
Prorogue	An act of ending of a session. It is the discretion of the President and the Governor
Question Hour	The list of the business before the House of Legislature is given to the members in advance. Generally, the first hour, of each sitting is "Question Hour". The Government give replies to the question already sent by the members. The members are entitled to get more information through "Supplementary Question". The main purpose of the "Question Hour" is to seek information and draw the attention of the Government to issues of public importance. After the "Question Hour, the agenda is taken up"
Quorum	Minimum number of people who have to be present at a meeting to make it valid.
Quo Warranto	By what authority
Rule of Law	Means that all persons are equal in the eye of law without any distinction of status, colour, caste and sex, and that the government cannot exercise any arbitrary powers.
Ratify	To approve officially
Redeem	To pay back all the principal and interest on a loan or a debt.
Referendum	Type of vote, where a whole population is asked to vote on a single question.
Repudiate	To refuse to accept
Rescind	To annul or to cancel
Restitution	Given back, the return which has been illegally obtained.
Sedition	Doing acts or speech tending to bring the government in to

	hatred or contempt and encourage civil disorder
Summons	A writ of a court commanding the attendance of a witness at a specified time and place
Seriatim	One after the other in order
Snap General Election	Means a general election, which is called for suddenly. This happens in a democratic regime when a duly installed majority government finds it difficult to deal with an extraordinary situation and wants the electorate to give a fresh verdict on its programmes and policies.
Snap Poll	A snap poll means a sudden election to a legislature held at a short notice before the expiry of its full term. A midterm poll also means the same thing, even if an election is ordered many months after the middle of a legislature's usual five-year span. But it was the surprise dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 1971 and the election ordered soon afterwards that has given wide currency to the expression "Snap Poll"
Statute	Established written law, especially an Act of Parliament
Splinter Group	Quite often parties have within them certain groups, which can be referred to as splinter groups. They are groups of people who differ from the main body in their approach views or strategy.
Starred and Unstarred Questions	When asking questions members of Parliament may ask for either oral or written answers. Questions to which oral answers are required are marked with an asterisk, and are known as Starred Questions. Questions requiring written replies are Unstarred Questions.
Subpoena	Court order requiring someone to appear in court
Subrogation	Legal principle whereby someone stands in the place of another person and acquires that person's right and is responsible for that person's liabilities.
Sue	To make someone to court or to start legal proceedings against someone to get compensation for a wrong.
Suit	Civil legal proceedings or lawsuit
Summon	To call someone to come
Tort	Civil wrong done by one person to another and entitling the victim to claim damages.
Treason	A modifiable offence, the crime of betraying one's country, usually by helping the enemy in time of war.
Treaty	Written legal agreement between countries
Uncrossed	Cheque which may be exchanged for cash anywhere

Cheque	
Unliquidated damages	Damages, which are not for a fixed amount of money but are awarded by a court as a matter of discretion.
Veto	Ban or order not to allow something to become law, even if it has been passed by a Parliament
Vice versa	Reverse position.
Vexatious	Annoying, done in order to annoy.
Vote on account	Usually, Vote on account is taken for a sum equivalent to one-sixth of the expenditure for the entire year in respect of demands for grants. S a convention, it is passed by the Lok Sabha without any discussion.
Vote of no-confidence	It implies that the legislature feels that the Council of Ministers is not working properly and deserves to be removed from office. It has lost the confidence of the legislature. If such a proposal is passed, the Council of Ministers resigns
Unicameral	Having only one House in a law making body.
Warrant	A legal document, issued by a competent authority to give power of arrest and detention before trial, seizure of property or search of houses and buildings.
Writ	A written command by the High Court or the Supreme Court directing the State or the court to act or abstain from acting in some way
Waiver	Voluntarily giving up or removing the conditions.
Warrant	Official document from a court, which allows someone to do something.
White Collar Crime	Crimes committed by business people or office workers.
Witness	Person who sees something happen or who is present when something happens
Writ	Legal document, which begins as action in the High court.
Whip	An important party official, entrusted with the responsibility of organizing declined voting according to the party directions and ensuring attendance of the party members on a specific occasion.
White Paper	A detailed policy statement issued by a government with regard to a matter of considerable public importance.
Zero-based Budgeting	It is an improvement over the traditional budgeting and not a substitute of it. It examines critically regularly and systematically the assumptions of the traditional budget. The

	budgeted item is treated at each year at the Zero- base level as if it was non-existent in the past.
Zero Hour	The period following the question hour. If

Important Legal Books

Books	Author
Constitution of India – Defaced and defied	N.A. Palkhivala
Constitutional Law of India	H.M. Seervai
Courts and their Judgments	Arun Shourie
Corruption in India	N. Vittal
International Law	Oppenheim
India divided	Rajendra Prasad
India Wins Freedom	Maulana Azad
Judge’s Miscellany, A	M. Hidayatullah
Law, Lawyers & Judges	H.R. Bhardwaj
Laws Vesus Justice	V.R Krishna Iyer
Law in Changing Society	W. Friedmann
Law and Literature	M.K Gandhi
Land Marks in the Law	Lord Denning
My Life – Law and Order	Motilal C. Setalvad
Prison Diary	Jayaprakash Narain
The Law of Nations	Brierly
the Judgment	Kuldip Nayar
We Indians	Khushwant Singh
We the Nation	N.A. Palkhiwala
We the People	N.A. Palkhiwala
India’s Legal System: Can it be saved?	Fail S. Nariman