

Legal English

Legal English is the language used by lawyers and other legal professionals to conduct legal matters. It is different from general English because it uses specific words and structures. Even when it uses words from general English, it may happen that the words have very different meanings than in general English. For example, the word *consideration* in general English means “careful thought” while in legal English it can also mean “payment”.

Below are some general attributes of legal English.

- Technical and specialised vocabulary, e.g. *leasehold, mediation, remedy*, etc.
- Use of Latin words, e.g. *bona fide, ex gratia, quid pro quo*, etc.
- Unusual word order, e.g. *for the purpose hereinafter appearing*, etc.
- Use of doublets and triplets for a single legal concept, e.g. *fit and proper, have and hold, terms and conditions*, etc.
- Use of pronominal adverbs, e.g. *aforementioned, hereof, thereof*, etc.
- Use of phrasal verbs, e.g. *parties enter into contracts, serve documents upon other parties, write off debts*, etc.

In the following exercises you will find some frequently used legal terms.

A. Choose the word which best completes each sentence.

1. A legal agreement in which money is paid in order to use a building, piece of land, vehicle, etc. for a period of time is called a _____.
 - a. stay
 - b. conveyance
 - c. lease
2. Laws passed by a parliament are called _____.
 1. legislation
 2. bills
 3. schedules
3. The person who is charged with a crime in a court case is called a _____.
 - a. bailiff
 - b. pleader
 - c. defendant
4. The formal decision made by a judge or a jury is called a _____.
 - a. lawsuit
 - b. verdict
 - c. brief
5. A lawyer who pleads before superior court is called a _____.
 - a. barrister
 - b. solicitor
 - c. pleader

Key: 1c, 2a, 3c, 4b, 5a

B. In the left-hand column you will find some legal terms. Match them with their definitions in the right hand column.

1. under/on oath
- a. having no permanent home

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| 2. at liberty to do something | b. having made a legal promise to tell the truth |
| 3. by virtue of something | c. in accordance with something |
| 4. of no fixed abode | d. supposed |
| 5. breach of the peace | e. the crime of noisy or violent behaviour in a public place |
| 6. adhere to something | f. as a result of something |
| 7. allude to something | g. having permission to do something |
| 8. alleged | h. obey a law, rule or agreement |
| 9. code of conduct | i. refer to something indirectly |
| 10. pursuant to something | j. a set of rules governing the behaviour of a specified group, such as employees |

Key: 1b, 2g, 3f, 4a, 5e, 6h, 7i, 8d, 9j, 10c

C. Complete the sentences with one of the following expressions: *last in, first out; undoing, summing-up, the letter of the law, take the liberty, under false pretences, in good faith, in question, limited-liability company, breach of contract.*

1. A contract may come to an end by agreement between the parties or as a result of the _____ by one of the parties.
2. The landowner signed the contract _____. He had no idea that it was a forgery.
3. Operating a _____ redundancy policy used to be the easiest option for employers, as the alternative often involved using complex selection matrices.
4. According to the media, the man _____ has kidnapped the mayor's son.
5. In his _____ the judge acknowledged that the company had violated the law.
6. The CEO's failure to read the whole contract before signing it was his _____.
7. After having had success on the foreign market, we _____ of offering our services to you as well.
8. She got the money from a neighbour _____. She tricked him by saying it was for her son's education.
9. We are not required to implement _____ in all cases, regardless of cost.
10. If you set up a _____ eventually you will need to start paying provisional and terminal taxes.

Key: 1. breach of contract, 2. in good faith, 3. last in, first out, 4. in question, 5. summing-up, 6. undoing, 7. take the liberty, 8. under false pretences, 9. the letter of the law, 10. limited-liability company