

43 The letter of the law

A Legal verbs

- to bend the law/rules:** to break the law/rules in a way that is considered not to be very harmful
- to contravene a law:** to break a law (noun = **contravention**)
- to infringe a law/rule:** to break a law/rule (noun = **infringement**)
- to impeach a president/governor:** to make a formal statement saying that a person in public office has committed a serious offence (noun = **impeachment**)
- to lodge an appeal:** to make an official request that a previous judgement should be changed
- to uphold/overturn a verdict:** to say that a previous decision in court was correct/incorrect
- to pervert the course of justice:** to make it difficult for justice to be done (noun = **perversion**)
- to quash a conviction:** to change a previous official decision that someone was guilty
- to set a precedent:** to establish a decision which must usually, in English law, be taken into account in future decisions
- to award/grant custody to:** to give one parent or adult the main responsibility for a child, especially after separation or divorce
- to annul a(n) agreement/marriage/law:** to declare that it no longer exists and never existed (noun = **annulment**)
- to sue** someone: to take legal action against someone
- to allege:** /ə'leɪdʒ/ to say that someone has done something illegal without giving proof (noun = **allegation**)
- to **amend** a law: to make changes to a law (noun = **amendment**)



B Crimes

crime	meaning	verb	criminal
discrimination	unfair treatment on grounds of sex, race or nationality	discriminate (against)	
embezzlement	stealing money that belongs to an organisation that you work for	embezzle	embezzler
harassment	putting undue pressure on someone, e.g. for sexual reasons or to get a debt repaid	harass	
insider trading/ dealing	illegal buying and selling of shares by someone who has specialist knowledge of a company	do/practise insider trading/ dealing	insider trader/ dealer
money laundering	moving money obtained illegally so that its origin cannot be traced	launder money	money launderer
perjury	lying when under oath	commit perjury	perjurer
stalking	following someone or giving them unwanted or obsessive attention	stalk	stalker
trespass/ trespassing	go onto someone else's land without permission	trespass	trespasser

C Words and expressions with law

- A **law-abiding** person is someone who always obeys the law.
- A **law-breaker** is someone who – often and deliberately – does not obey the law.
- If you **take the law into your own hands**, you do something illegal to punish someone because you feel the legal system will not punish that person.
- If you **lay down the law**, you say with great force what you think should happen.
- If someone is **a law unto himself/herself**, he or she behaves in a way which is independent and not the way in which most other people behave.

Exercises

43.1 Choose the correct verbs from A to fill the gaps. Put the verb in the correct form.

- 1 The governor on the province was for wrongful use of state money.
- 2 The prisoner decided to an appeal against the court's decision.
- 3 The appeal court the verdict of the lower court and the prisoner was released.
- 4 In English law, a previous legal decision usually a precedent for future decisions.
- 5 Judges often custody to the mother rather than the father.
- 6 I'm not asking you to break the rules, just to them a little.
- 7 You my legal rights by not allowing me to vote.
- 8 Witnesses charged with perjury are accused of the course of justice.
- 9 The marriage was because the man had never properly divorced his first wife.
- 10 The Supreme Court the murder conviction and the man was freed.

43.2 Which of the crimes in B might each of these people be charged with?

- 1 A camper who spent a night on a farmer's land without asking permission.
- 2 A businessman who diverted funds from the account of the company he worked for into his own personal account.
- 3 An employer who gave a job to a man although he was less suitable for the post than a woman applicant.
- 4 A witness who gave false evidence in court.
- 5 A person who kept making inappropriate comments about a colleague's personal appearance.
- 6 A board member who took advantage of what they knew about the business's plans to make a profit on the stock market.
- 7 A person who follows someone or calls them every day and buys them gifts even though they are not in a relationship.

43.3 Choose a noun from each of these verbs to complete each sentence.

impeach allege contravene annul harass infringe pervert amend

- 1 Parliament is currently discussing a number of to the current laws on citizenship.
- 2 Amy took her employer to court for in the workplace.
- 3 Some people consider of others' rights as being as serious a crime as theft.
- 4 By taking on work for a competitor Nathan was in of the terms of his contract.
- 5 The trial was criticised by many as a of justice.
- 6 To suggest that Leah took the money is a very serious
- 7 The circumstances are such that I think the judge may agree to a(n) of their marriage.
- 8 The of a president has only taken place a couple of times in US history.

43.4 Choose an expression from C to complete each sentence.

- 1 You should let the police deal with the situation – it's far too risky to
- 2 Sam started getting into trouble when he got in with a gang of habitual
- 3 You shouldn't start on your first day in a new job.
- 4 Masha will never be able to get Vadim to conform – he's
- 5 Isabelle is far too to agree to bring extra cigarettes into the country.

43.5

Over to you

Look at the website www.britishlaw.org.uk to find out more about the law in the UK. Note down at least ten more useful legal words and expressions.