

A-Level Law: Summer Induction Task

Welcome to A-Level Law!

Unlike most of your other A-Levels, Law is a completely new subject for the vast majority of students. You do not need any prior legal knowledge to start this course.

This summer task is designed to introduce you to how the English Legal System works and how lawyers think. It is split into **three short tasks**. Total recommended time to complete this is around **2 to 3 hours**. Please print this out or complete it in a digital document, and bring it to your very first Law lesson in September.

Task 1: The Great Legal Divide (Civil vs. Criminal)

One of the most common mistakes people make is using the wrong terminology. In everyday life, people say things like, "*I'm going to press charges*" or "*He is guilty of breaking our contract!*" In A-Level Law, mixing up civil and criminal vocabulary will cost you marks instantly.

The Core Theory

Read the breakdown below comparing the two distinct branches of law:

Feature	Criminal Law	Civil Law
Definition	Offences against the state/society as a whole.	Disputes between private individuals or businesses.
Purpose	To maintain social order and punish offenders.	To rectify a wrong and put the victim back in their original position.
Who brings the case?	The State (via the Prosecution / Crown Prosecution Service).	The individual who was wronged (the Claimant).
The Parties	Prosecution vs. Defendant	Claimant vs. Defendant

Verdict	The Defendant is found Guilty or Not Guilty .	The Defendant is found Liable or Not Liable .
Standard of Proof	Beyond reasonable doubt (99% sure).	Balance of probabilities (51%+ sure, more likely than not).
Outcome	Sentence (Prison, fine, community service).	Remedy (Compensation/Damages, injunctions).

Your Task

Look at the following four real-world scenarios. For each one, state whether it would be a **Criminal** or **Civil** case, and briefly explain **why** using the correct terminology from the table above.

1. **Scenario A:** Chloe is driving text-messaging her friend. She runs a red light and smashes into Marcus's car. Marcus breaks his collarbone and his car is written off.
2. **Scenario B:** James buys a brand new smartphone from an electronics shop. Two days later, the battery overheats and explodes, burning his bedroom carpet. The shop refuses to give him a refund.
3. **Scenario C:** Amira is caught by security guards walking out of a luxury department store with three designer handbags hidden in her backpack that she didn't pay for.
4. **Scenario D:** Tom sneaks up behind a stranger at a train station, punches them in the back of the head, and runs away with their wallet.

Task 2: The Judge's Dilemma (Statutory Interpretation)

Parliament creates laws, which are called **Statutes** (or Acts of Parliament). However, words can be messy, vague, or change meaning over time. It is up to judges in court to interpret what those words actually mean.

To do this, judges use different rules. One of these is called the **Literal Rule**—which means the judge must give the words in the statute their exact, literal, dictionary definition, even if the result seems completely unfair or absurd.

The Case Study: *Fisher v Bell* (1961)

The Law: The *Restriction of Weapons Act 1959* made it a criminal offence to "**manufacture, sell or hire or offer for sale or hire**" flick-knives.

The Facts: A shopkeeper named Mr. Bell displayed a flick-knife in his shop window with a price ticket attached to it. He was arrested and charged with "offering the knife for sale".

The Legal Twist: In English contract law, placing an item in a shop window is technically not a legal "offer to sell." Instead, it is legally called an "*invitation to treat*" (inviting the customer to come inside and make an offer to buy it).

Your Task

Imagine you are the judge sitting in court in 1961. You *must* follow the **Literal Rule** of interpretation.

Write a short paragraph (50–100 words) answering the following:

- Using the **Literal Rule**, did Mr. Bell technically break the exact wording of the law?
- Should he be found guilty or not guilty?
- Do you think using the Literal Rule here achieved a fair or sensible result for society? Why/why not?

Task 3: Law in the Headlines

Law isn't just dusty old books; it happens around us every single day.

Your Task

Find a news article from this summer (online or in a newspaper) regarding a legal issue in the UK. This could be a criminal trial, a new law being debated in Parliament, a high-profile compensation sue-case, or a human rights issue.

Cut out the article or paste the link, and answer the following three questions in bullet points:

1. **Summary:** What actually happened in this story? (2–3 sentences)
2. **Classification:** Is this an example of criminal law or civil law? Explain why.
3. **Your Opinion:** Do you agree or disagree with the outcome or the law mentioned in the article? Give one reason for your view.