

TEACHER'S NOTE: CRIMINAL OR CIVIL

Criminal law

Criminal law is about the relationship between a person and the State and society as a whole. Its purpose is to deter people from behaviour which is thought to be a danger to themselves, others or the community in general. Examples might include murder, robbery, drug offences and violent or anti-social acts. In a criminal case, the State (represented by An Garda Síochána or the Director of Public Prosecutions) brings the case to court. The injured party (the victim) is not a party to the case but may be called as a witness.

Civil law

For the most part, civil law concerns a person's relationship with other people or groups of people. Most civil issues need never come before a court. But where people cannot settle their differences they can bring the matter to court. Civil courts deal with areas such as family law, compensation for personal injury or employment disputes.

Below are the answers to *Student Handout: Civil or Criminal?*

Will these cases be heard in the civil or criminal courts?

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| 1. Assault causing serious harm: | Criminal |
| 2. A speeding offence: | Criminal |
| 3. A dispute with a neighbour over land boundaries: | Civil |
| 4. Purchase of a car which is defective: | Civil |
| 5. An application to stop a school from expelling a pupil: | Civil |
| 6. Possession of a quantity of cannabis: | Criminal |
| 7. Murder: | Criminal |
| 8. Bullying in the workplace: | Civil |
| 9. An application for a barring order against a spouse: | Civil |
| 10. A builder has not completed all the building works on a house: | Civil |