



PRO SE HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 10: GLOSSARY OF COMMON LEGAL TERMS
(ALL-IN-ONE DOCUMENT)

FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION
ACCESS TO JUSTICE TASK FORCE

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"A HANDBOOK FOR PRO SE LITIGANTS"

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PRO SE HANDBOOK
FROM THE FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION

CHAPTER 10 GLOSSARY OF COMMON LEGAL TERMS

AUTHOR: Federal Bar Association: Access to Justice Task Force

ITEMS 10.00



10.00 | GLOSSARY OF COMMON LEGAL TERMS¹²

ACTION	Another term for lawsuit or case.
ADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE	Evidence that can properly be introduced at trial for the judge or jury to consider in reaching a decision; the Federal Rules of Evidence govern the admissibility of evidence in federal court.
ADR (ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION)	A Court-sponsored program offering methods by which a complaint can be resolved outside of traditional court proceedings.
ADJOURN, ADJOURNMENT	To bring a proceeding to an end, such as a court calendar or trial.
AFFIDAVIT	A statement of fact written by a witness, which the witness affirms to be true before a notary public.
AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES	Allegations included in the answer that, under legal rules, defeat all or a portion of the plaintiff's claim.
ALLEGATION	An assertion of fact in a complaint or other pleading.
AMEND (A DOCUMENT)	To alter or change a document that has been filed with the Court, such as a complaint or answer, by filing and serving a revised version of that document. Certain documents cannot be amended without prior approval of the Court.
AMENDED PLEADING (COMPLAINT OR ANSWER)	A revised version of the original complaint or answer that has been filed with the Court.
AMOUNT IN CONTROVERSY	The dollar value of how much the plaintiff is asking for in the complaint.
ANSWER	The written response to a complaint. An "answer on the merits" challenges the complaint's factual accuracy.
APPEAL	To seek formal review of a district court judgment by the Court of Appeals.
APPLICATION TO PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS (IFP)	A form filed by the plaintiff asking permission to file the complaint without paying the entire filing fee at the start of the case, but instead to pay in installments. The plaintiff must establish an inability to pay the whole fee.
ARBITRATION	A form of alternative dispute resolution, overseen by a judge or arbitrator, in which the parties argue their positions in a trial-like setting that lacks some of the formalities of a full trial.
ARBITRATOR	The neutral third party who presides at arbitration, usually an attorney.
AWARD	The sum of money or other relief to which an arbitrator rules the winning party in an arbitration is entitled.
BENCH TRIAL	A trial in which the judge, rather than the jury, determines the law, the facts, and the verdict of the lawsuit. A bench trial is also known as a "court trial."
BREACH	Failure to perform a legal obligation.
BRIEF	A document filed with the Court arguing for or against a motion.
BURDEN OF PROOF	Under legal rules, one party or the other bears responsibility for proving or disproving one or more elements of a claim. What must be proven or disproven is the burden of proof.



CAPTION	A formatted heading on the first page of every document filed with the Court, listing the parties, the name of the case, and other identifying information. The specific information that must be included in the caption is explained in Rule 10(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
CAPTION PAGE	The cover page of the document containing the caption. It is always the first page of any document a party to a lawsuit files with the Court.
CASE	Another term for lawsuit or action.
CASE FILE	A file in which the original of every document manually filed with the Court is kept. E-filed documents are generally not placed in the case file.
CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE (CMC)	A court proceeding at which the judge, with the help of the parties, sets a schedule for various events in the case.
CASE MANAGEMENT ORDER	The Court's written order scheduling certain events in the case.
CASE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT	A statement filed by the parties providing information to be discussed at the case management conference.
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE	A document showing that a copy of a particular document — for example, notice of motion — has been mailed or otherwise provided to (in other words, “served on”) all of the other parties in the lawsuit.
CHALLENGE FOR CAUSE	A request by a party that the Court excuse a juror whom they believe to be too biased to be fair and impartial, or unable perform his or her duties as a juror for other reasons.
CHAMBERS	The private offices of an individual judge and the judge's “chambers staff” — usually an administrative assistant and law clerks.
CHAMBERS COPY	A paper copy of a case document delivered to the Court for the judge's use.
CITATION	A reference to a law, rule, or case.
CLAIM	A statement made in a complaint, in which the plaintiff(s) argue that the defendant(s) violated the law in a specific way; sometimes called a count.
CLOSING ARGUMENTS	An oral statement by each party summarizing the evidence and arguing how the jury (or, in a bench trial, the judge) should decide the case.
COMPLAINT	A legal document in which the plaintiff tells the Court and the defendant how and why the defendant violated the law in a way that has caused harm to the plaintiff.
COMPULSORY COUNTERCLAIM	A claim by the defendant against the plaintiff that is based on the same events or transactions as the plaintiff's claim against the defendant.
CONTEMPT OF COURT	Acts found by the Court to be committed in willful violation of the Court's authority or dignity, or to interfere with or obstruct its administration of justice.
CONTINUANCE	An extension of time ordered by the Court.
COUNSEL	Attorney(s); lawyer(s).
COUNT	A term sometimes used instead of claim.



COUNTERCLAIM	A defendant's complaint against the plaintiff, filed in the plaintiff's case.
COURT OF APPEALS	A court that hears appeals from the district courts located within its circuit, as well as appeals from decisions of federal administrative agencies.
COURT REPORTER	A person specially trained and licensed to record testimony in the courtroom or, in the case of depositions, another location.
COURTROOM DEPUTY	A Court employee who assists the judge in the courtroom and usually sits at a desk in front of the judge.
COURT TRIAL	A trial (also known as a "bench trial") in which the judge, rather than the jury, determines the law, the facts, and the verdict of the lawsuit.
CROSSCLAIM	A new claim bringing a new party into the case or asserting a claim against a co-party (by a plaintiff against a co-plaintiff or by a defendant against a co-defendant).
CROSS-EXAMINATION	The opposing party's questioning of a witness following direct examination, generally limited to the topics covered during the direct examination.
DAMAGES	The money that can be recovered in the courts by the plaintiff for the plaintiff's loss or injury due to the defendant's violation of the law.
DELIBERATE	The process in which the jury discusses the case in private and makes a decision about the verdict. See also jury deliberations.
DE NOVO REVIEW	A Court's complete review and re-determination the matter before it from the beginning; for example, a referring judge's de novo review of a magistrate judge's report and recommendation includes considering the same evidence reviewed by the magistrate judge and reaching an independent conclusion.
DECLARATION	A written statement signed under penalty of perjury by a person who has personal knowledge that what he or she states is true; declarations may contain only facts and may not contain law or argument. The person who signs a declaration is called a declarant.
DEFAULT	A defendant's failure to file an answer or other response within the required amount of time, after being properly served with the complaint.
DEFAULT JUDGMENT	A judgment entered against a defendant who fails to respond to the complaint.
DEFENDANT	The person, company or government agency against whom the plaintiff makes claims in the complaint.
DEFENDANT'S TABLE	The table where the defendant sits, usually the one further from the jury box.
DEFENSES	The reasons given by the defendant why the plaintiff's claims should be dismissed.
DEPONENT	The person who answers the questions in a deposition; a deponent can be any person who may have information about the lawsuit, including one of the other parties to the lawsuit.
DEPOSITION	A question-and-answer session, before trial and outside the courtroom, in which one party to the lawsuit asks another person, who is under oath, questions about the events and issues in the lawsuit. The process of taking a deposition is called deposing.
DEPOSITION NOTICE	A notice served on the deponent specifying the time and place of the deposition.



DEPOSITION SUBPOENA	See subpoena.
DIRECT EXAMINATION	The process during a trial in which a party calls witnesses to the witness stand and asks them questions.
DISCLOSURES	Information that each party must automatically give the other parties in a lawsuit.
DISCOVERY	The formal process by which a party to a lawsuit asks other people to provide information about the events and issues in the case.
DISCOVERY PLAN	The joint proposed discovery plan required by Rule 26(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which must include the parties' views about, and proposals for, how discovery should proceed in the lawsuit.
DISTRICT JUDGE	A federal judge who is nominated by the President of the United States and confirmed by the United States Senate to a lifetime appointment.
DIVERSITY JURISDICTION	A basis for federal court jurisdiction in lawsuits in which none of the plaintiffs live in the same state as any of the defendants and the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000.
DOCKET	The computer file for each case, maintained by the Court, listing the title of every document filed, the date of filing and docketing of each document and other information.
DOCKET CLERK	Also known as "case systems administrator," a court staff member who enters documents and case information into the court docket.
ELECTRONIC CASE FILING (ECF)	Also known as "e-filing," the process of submitting documents to the Court for filing and serving them on other parties electronically through the Internet. The United States Courts use an e-filing system called "Electronic Case Filing" or "ECF."
ECF HELPDESK	A court staff member with ECF expertise who helps ECF users with technical problems (by phone or email).
ELEMENT (OF A CLAIM OR DEFENSE)	An essential component of a legal claim or defense.
ENTRY OF DEFAULT	A formal action taken by the Clerk of Court in response to a plaintiff's request when a defendant has not responded to a properly served complaint; the Clerk must enter default against the defendant before the plaintiff may file a motion for default judgment.
EVIDENCE	Testimony, documents, recordings, photographs and physical objects that tend to establish the truth of important facts in a case.
EX PARTE MOTION	A motion that is filed without notice to the opposing party.
EX PARTE	Without notice to the other parties and without their being present (as in a written or telephone communication with the Court).
EXHIBITS	Documents or other materials that are presented as evidence at trial or as attachments to motions or declarations.
EXPERT DISCLOSURES	The disclosures required by Rule 26(a)(2) to the other parties of the identity of, and additional information about, any expert witnesses who will testify at trial.
EXPERT REPORT	A written report signed by an expert witness that must accompany the expert disclosures for any expert witness; Rule 26(a)(2)(B) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure lists what must be included in an expert report.



EXPERT WITNESS	A person who has scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge that can help the Court or the jury understand the evidence.
FEDERAL QUESTION JURISDICTION	Federal courts are authorized to hear lawsuits in which at least one of the plaintiff's claims arises under the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States.
FEDERAL RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE	The procedural rules that apply to every federal district court in the United States.
FEDERAL RULES OF EVIDENCE	The rules for submitting, considering and admitting evidence in the federal courts.
FILING	The process by which documents are submitted to the Court and entered into the case docket.
FILING FEE	The amount of money the Court charges the plaintiff to file a new lawsuit.
FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW	A statement issued by a judge explaining what facts he or she has found to be true and the legal consequences to be included in the judgment; it concludes a bench trial once all evidence has been submitted and all arguments have been presented.
FRAUD	The act of making a false representation of a past or present fact on which another person relies, resulting in injury (usually financial).
GOOD FAITH	Having honesty of intention; for example, negotiating in good faith would be to come to the table with an open mind and a sincere desire to reach an agreement.
GROUND	The reason or reasons for requesting action by the Court.
HEARING	A formal proceeding before the judge for the purpose of resolving one or more issues.
HEARSAY	A statement offered to prove the truth of the matter asserted in the statement.
IMPEACHMENT	To call into question a witness's truthfulness or credibility.
IN FORMA PAUPERIS (IFP)	See application to proceed in forma pauperis.
IN PROPRIA PERSONA	Often shortened to "pro se;"- representing oneself; Latin for "in his or her own person."
INITIAL DISCLOSURES	The disclosures that the parties are required to serve within 14 days of their initial case management conference.
INTERLOCUTORY ORDER	Court orders issued before judgment.
INTERROGATORIES	Written questions served on another party in the lawsuit, which must be answered (or objected to) in writing and under oath. I
ISSUE SUMMONS	What the Clerk of Court must do before a summons is valid for service on a defendant.
JOINT CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE (CMC) STATEMENT	A court-approved form the parties are asked to complete jointly and file before the initial case management conference.



JUDGMENT	A final document issued by the Court stating which party wins on each claim. Unless there are post-judgment motions, the entry of judgment closes the case.
JURISDICTION	See diversity jurisdiction and subject matter jurisdiction.
JURY BOX	The rows of seats, usually located against a side wall in a courtroom and separated from the well of the courtroom by a divider, where the jury sits during a trial.
JURY DELIBERATIONS	The process in which the jury, after having heard all the evidence, closing arguments from the parties, and instructions from the judge, meets in private to decide the case.
JURY INSTRUCTIONS	The judge's directions to the jury about its duties, the law that applies to the lawsuit, and how it should evaluate the evidence.
JURY SELECTION	The process by which the individual members of the jury are chosen.
JURY TRIAL	A trial in which a jury weighs the evidence and determines what happened; the Court instructs the jury on the law, and the jury applies the law to the facts and determines who wins the lawsuit.
LAW LIBRARY	A special library containing only legal materials, usually staffed by a specially trained librarian.
LECTERN	The stand for holding papers in front of the bench in the courtroom where an attorney or pro se party making arguments on a motion stands and speaks to the judge.
LITIGANTS	The parties to a lawsuit.
LOCAL RULES	Specific federal court rules that set forth additional requirements to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure that only apply to the specific District Court deciding your case.
MAGISTRATE JUDGE	A judicial officer who is appointed by the Court for an 8-year, renewable term and has some, but not all, of the powers of a district judge. A magistrate judge may handle civil cases from start to finish if all parties consent. In non-consent cases, a magistrate judge may hear motions and other pretrial matters assigned by a district judge.
MANUAL FILING	A filing of a paper document at the Clerk's Office instead of by electronic filing/e-filing.
MATERIAL FACT	A fact that must be proven to establish an element of a claim or defense in the lawsuit.
MEDIATION	An ADR process in which a trained mediator helps the parties talk through the issues in the case to seek a negotiated resolution of all or part of the dispute.
MEET AND CONFER	The parties meeting and working together to resolve specific issues under Court rules or a Court order.
MENTAL EXAMINATION	See physical or mental examination.
MOTION	A formal application to the Court asking for a specific ruling or order (such as dismissal of the plaintiff's lawsuit).
MOTION FOR A MORE DEFINITE STATEMENT	Defendant argues that the complaint is so vague, ambiguous, or confusing that he or she cannot respond to it and asks for additional details.
MOTION FOR A NEW TRIAL	Argues that another trial should be held because of a deficiency in the current trial.



MOTION FOR A PROTECTIVE ORDER	Asks the Court to relieve a party of the obligation to respond to a discovery request or grant more time to respond.
MOTION FOR DEFAULT JUDGMENT	Asks the Court to grant judgment in favor of the plaintiff because the defendant failed to file an answer to the complaint. If the court grants the motion, the plaintiff wins the case.
MOTION FOR JUDGMENT AS A MATTER OF LAW	Argues that the opposing party's evidence is so legally deficient that no jury could reasonably decide the case in favor of that party. The defendant may bring such a motion after the plaintiff has presented all evidence, and after all the evidence has been presented, either party may bring such a motion; if the Court grants the motion, the case is over.
MOTION FOR LEAVE TO FILE A MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION	Asks the Court to change a decision it has already made. A party must ask the Court for permission to file such a motion.
MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION	Asks the Court to consider changing a previous decision; cannot be filed without the permission of the Court.
MOTION FOR RELIEF FROM JUDGMENT OR ORDER	Asks the Court to rule that a judgment or order should not be given effect or should be changed for one of the reasons permitted by Rule 60(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
MOTION FOR SANCTIONS	Asks the Court to impose a penalty on a party; for example, in the context of discovery, a motion for sanctions asks the Court to punish a person for failing to make required disclosures, refusing to respond to a discovery request, or refusing to obey a court order to respond to a discovery request.
MOTION FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT	Asks the Court to decide a lawsuit without a trial because the evidence shows that there is no real dispute about the key facts.
MOTION IN LIMINE	A motion asking the judge to settle an issue relating to the trial, usually argued shortly before the beginning of trial.
MOTION TO AMEND OR ALTER THE JUDGMENT	After entry of judgment, asks the Court to correct what a party argues is a mistake in the judgment.
MOTION TO COMPEL	Asks the Court to order a person to make disclosures, or to respond to a discovery request, or to provide more detailed disclosures or a more detailed response to a discovery request.
MOTION TO DISMISS	Asks the Court to deny certain claims in the complaint, due to procedural defects.
MOTION TO EXTEND TIME	A motion asking the Court to allow more time to file a brief or comply with a court order; also referred to as a continuance.
MOTION TO SET ASIDE DEFAULT/DEFAULT JUDGMENT	A defendant against whom default or default judgment has been entered may bring this motion in order to be allowed to appear in the suit and respond to the complaint.
MOTION TO SHORTEN TIME	Asks the Court to hear a motion on a shorter-than-usual schedule.
MOTION TO STRIKE	A motion asking the Court to order certain parts of the complaint or other pleading deleted because they are redundant, immaterial, impertinent, or scandalous.
MOVING PARTY	The party who files a motion.
NON-BINDING ARBITRATION	An alternative dispute resolution process in which a neutral third party (an arbitrator) gives a decision on the complaint after a hearing at which both parties have an opportunity to be heard; the parties are not required to abide by the decision.
NON-MOVING PARTY	Usually used in the context of a motion for summary judgment; any party who is not bringing the motion.



NON-PARTY DEPONENT	A deponent who is not a party to the lawsuit.
NON-PARTY WITNESS	A person who is not a party to the lawsuit but who has relevant information.
NOTICE OF ELECTRONIC FILING (NEF)	An email generated by the ECF system that is sent to every registered attorney, party and watcher associated with a case every time a new document is filed. The NEF contains details about the filing and a hyperlink to the new document.
NOTICE OF DEPOSITION	Gives all the information required under Rules 30(b) and 26(g)(1) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and must be served on opposing parties to a lawsuit.
NOTARY PUBLIC	A public officer who is authorized by the state or federal government to administer oaths and to attest to the authenticity of signatures.
NOTICE OF MOTION	A statement in the first paragraph of a motion telling the other parties what type of motion you have filed and when you have asked the Court to hold a hearing on the motion.
OBJECTION	The formal means of challenging evidence on the ground that it is not admissible.
ON THE PAPERS	A judge may decide to render a decision on a motion "on the papers" rather than holding a hearing in the courtroom; in such a case, the judge will vacate the hearing.
OPENING STATEMENTS	At the beginning of the trial, after the jury has been selected, if it is a jury trial, the parties have an opportunity to make individual opening statements, in which they can describe the issues in the case and state what they expect to prove during the trial.
OPPOSING PARTY	In the context of motions, the party against whom a motion is filed; more generally, the party on the other side.
OPPOSITION, OPPOSITION BRIEF	A filing that consists of a brief, often accompanied by evidence, filed with the court containing facts and legal arguments that explain why the Court should deny the motion.
OVERRULE AN OBJECTION	During examination of witnesses at trial, if a party objects to evidence being admitted or a question being asked, the judge may overrule the objection. This means that the evidence will be admitted, or the question may be asked, unless the judge later sustains a different objection.
PACER SYSTEM	"Public Access to Electronic Court Records" is an internet database where docket information is stored.
PEREMPTORY CHALLENGE	During jury selection, after all the jurors challenged for cause have been excused, the parties will have an opportunity to request that additional jurors be excused without having to give any reason for the request
PERJURY	A false statement made under oath, punishable as a crime.
PERMISSIVE COUNTERCLAIM	A claim by the defendant against the plaintiff that is not based on the same events or transactions as the plaintiff's claim against the defendant.
PHYSICAL OR MENTAL EXAMINATION	If the physical or mental condition of a party (or a person under the custody or legal control of a party) is at issue in a lawsuit, the Court may order that person to have a physical or mental examination by a medical professional such as a physician or psychiatrist; unlike other discovery procedures, physical or mental examinations can be obtained only by filing a motion with the court, or by agreement of the parties.



PLEADINGS, PLEADING PAPER	Formal documents that are filed with the court, especially initial filings such as complaints and answers. Pleadings and most other court filings are written on pleading paper, which in this Court is letter-sized paper with the line numbers 1 through 28 running down the left side.
PLAINTIFF	The person who filed the complaint and claims to be injured by a violation of the law.
PLAINTIFF'S TABLE	In the center of the courtroom, there are two long tables and chairs where the lawyers and parties sit during hearings and trial; the table nearest the jury box is usually the plaintiff's.
PRAYER FOR RELIEF	The last section of a complaint, in which the plaintiff tells the Court what the plaintiff wants from the lawsuit, such as money damages, an injunction, or other relief.
PRETRIAL CONFERENCE	A hearing shortly before trial where the judge discusses the requirements for conducting trial and resolves any final issues that have arisen before trial.
PRETRIAL DISCLOSURES	The disclosures required by Rule 26(a) (3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure of certain information about evidence that you may present at trial (except for evidence that will be used solely for impeachment).
PRIVILEGED INFORMATION	Information that is protected by legal rules from disclosure during discovery and trial.
PRO BONO REPRESENTATION	Legal representation by an attorney that is free to the person represented.
PRO SE	A Latin term meaning "for oneself." A pro se litigant is a party without a lawyer handling a case in court.
PROCEDURAL RULES	The rules parties must follow for bringing and defending against a lawsuit in court.
PROCESS SERVER	A person authorized by law to serve the complaint and summons on the defendant.
PROOF OF SERVICE	A document attached to each document filed with the court (or filed separately at the same time as the document) in which the filer affirms that he or she has served the document on other parties.
PROPOSED ORDER (OR OTHER DOCUMENT)	A document a party is required by court rules to submit with a filing such as a motion that can serve as the final order if the judge crosses off the word "proposed" and signs at the bottom.
PROTECTIVE ORDER	A court order limiting discovery, either as to how discovery may be conducted or what can be discovered.
QUASH A SUBPOENA	After a motion, the Court's action vacating a subpoena so that it has no legal effect.
REBUTTAL	The final stage of presenting evidence in a trial, presented by the plaintiff.
TESTIMONY	At trial, after defendants have completed examining each of their witnesses, plaintiffs can call additional witnesses solely to counter — or "rebut" — testimony given by the defendants' witnesses.
RE-DIRECT EXAMINATION	At trial, after the opposing party has cross-examined a witness, the party who called the witness may ask the witness questions about topics covered during the cross-examination.
REFERRING JUDGE	A federal district judge who refers an issue or motion within a lawsuit to another judge, usually a magistrate judge.
REFERRAL JUDGE	A United States magistrate judge assigned to handle an issue, proceeding or motion within a case assigned to a federal district judge.



REMEDIES	In the context of a civil lawsuit, remedies are actions the Court may take to redress or compensate a violation of rights under the law.
RENEWED MOTION FOR JUDGMENT AS A MATTER OF LAW	A motion arguing that the jury must have made a mistake in its verdict because the evidence was so one-sided that no reasonable jury could have reached that decision.
REPLY	Refers to both the answer to a counterclaim and the response to the opposition to a motion.
REPLY BRIEF	A document responding to the opposition to a motion.
REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION	After a federal district judge refers an issue for factual and legal findings by a magistrate judge, the magistrate judge files a report and recommendation containing those findings.
REQUEST FOR ADMISSION	A discovery request that a party admit a material fact or element of a claim.
REQUEST FOR ENTRY OF DEFAULT	The first step for the plaintiff to obtain a default judgment by the Court against a defendant; directed to the Clerk of Court, the request must show that the defendant has been served with the complaint and summons, but has not filed a written response to the complaint in the required time.
REQUEST FOR INSPECTION OF PROPERTY	A discovery request served on a party in order to enter property controlled by that party for the purpose of inspecting, measuring, surveying, photographing, testing or sampling the property or any object on the property relevant to your lawsuit.
REQUEST FOR PRODUCTION (OF DOCUMENTS, ETC.)	A common discovery request served by a party seeking documents or other items relevant to the lawsuit from another party.
REQUEST FOR PRODUCTION OF TANGIBLE THINGS	A discovery request served on a party in order to inspect, copy, test, or sample anything relevant to your lawsuit which is in the possession, custody, or control of another party to the lawsuit.
REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF SERVICE	A written request that the defendant accept the summons and complaint without formal service.
REQUESTS FOR ADMISSION	A discovery request served on a party asking that the party admit in writing and under oath the truth of any statement, or to admit the applicability of a law to a set of facts.
RULING FROM THE BENCH	A Court's announcing its decision on a motion in the courtroom following the hearing on that motion.
SANCTION	A punishment the Court may impose on a party or an attorney for violating the Court's rules or orders.
SELF-AUTHENTICATING	Documents that do not need any proof of their genuineness beyond the documents themselves, in order for them to be admissible evidence in accord with Rule 902 of the Federal Rules of Evidence.
SERVE, SERVICE	The act of providing a document on a party in accord with the requirements found in Rules 4 and 5 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
SERVICE OF PROCESS	The formal delivery of the original complaint in the lawsuit to the defendant in accord with the requirements for service found in Rule 5 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE	A proceeding usually held in a magistrate judge's chambers in which the judge works with the parties toward a negotiated resolution of part or all of the case.
SIDE BAR	A private conference beside the judge's bench between the judge, and the lawyers (or self-represented parties) to discuss any issue out of the jury's hearing.



SPEAKING MOTION	A motion first made in the courtroom without motion papers being filed first.
STANDING ORDERS	An individual judge's orders setting out rules and procedures, in addition to those found in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the Civil Local Rules, that apply in all cases before that judge. You can find them on the district court judge's webpage.
STATEMENT OF NONOPPOSITION	A party's written notice that it does not oppose another party's motion.
STATEMENT OF UNDISPUTED FACTS	A list of facts filed in a summary judgment motions with citations to the evidence showing that those facts are true. The statement may be jointly prepared and filed by the parties; separate statements require a prior court order.
STATUS CONFERENCE	A hearing the judge may hold during the course of the lawsuit to assess the progress of the case, or address problems the parties are having.
STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS	A legal time limit by which the plaintiff must file a complaint; after the time limit, the complaint may be dismissed as time barred.
STIPULATION	A written agreement signed by all the parties to the lawsuit or their attorneys.
STRIKE	To order claims or parts of documents "stricken" or deleted so that they cannot be part of the lawsuit or proceeding.
SUBJECT MATTER JURISDICTION	A federal court has subject matter jurisdiction only as defined by Congress over cases arising under the Constitution, treaties or laws of the United States and diversity cases in which the parties are from different states and the amount in controversy is greater than \$75,000.
SUBPOENA	A document issued by the Court requiring a non-party to appear for a court proceeding or deposition at a specific time and place or to make certain documents available at a specific time and place.
SUBPOENA DUCES TECUM	A form of subpoena used to require a non-party deponent to bring specified documents to a deposition.
SUBSTANTIVE LAW	Determines whether the facts of each individual lawsuit constitute a violation of the law for which the Court may order a remedy.
SUMMARY JUDGMENT	After a motion, a decision by the Court to enter judgment in favor of one of the parties without a trial, because the evidence shows that there is no real dispute about the material facts.
SUMMONS	A document from the Court that you must serve on the defendant along with your original complaint to start your lawsuit.
SUSTAIN AN OBJECTION	To affirm that an objection is correct, and evidence should be excluded.
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES	The list of references to law that should be included with every brief usually more than 10 pages long.
TAKING A MOTION UNDER CONSIDERATION (OR UNDER SUBMISSION)	The Court's taking time to consider the motion and write an order after hearing arguments on the motion instead of ruling on the motion in the courtroom.
TRANSCRIPT	The written version of what was said during a court proceeding or deposition as typed by a court reporter or court stenographer.
TRIAL SUBPOENA	A type of subpoena that requires a witness to appear to testify at trial on a certain date.



UNDISPUTED FACT	A fact about which all the parties agree.
VACATE	To set aside a Court order so that the order has no further effect, or to cancel a scheduled hearing or trial.
VENUE	The geographic location where the lawsuit is filed.
VERDICT	The jury's final decision about the issues in the trial.
VERDICT FORM	In a jury trial, the form the jury fills out to record the verdict.
VOIR DIRE	Part of the jury selection process in which potential jurors are asked questions designed to reveal biases that would interfere with fair and impartial jury service; the judge may ask questions from a list the parties have submitted before trial and may also allow the lawyers (or parties without lawyers) to ask additional questions.
WAIVER OF SERVICE, WAIVING SERVICE	A defendant's written, signed agreement that he or she does not require a document (usually the complaint) to be served on him or her in accordance with the formal service requirements of Rule 5 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
WITH PREJUDICE	As a final decision on the merits of the claim. If a court dismisses claims in your complaint with prejudice, you may not file another complaint in which you assert those claims again.
WITHOUT PREJUDICE	Without a final decision on the merits which would prevent the claim from being re-filed. Dismissal without prejudice is sometimes also referred to as dismissal "with leave to amend" because you are permitted to file an amended complaint or other document.
WITNESS	A person who has personal or expert knowledge of facts relevant to a lawsuit.
WITNESS BOX	The seat in which a witness sits when testifying in court, usually located to the side of the bench.

(Federal Bar Association: Access to Justice Task Force. © 2019.

Honorable Mention: USNYND, USCAND)

Footnotes

¹² This Glossary was borrowed from the United States District Court for the Northern District of California's handbook titled "Representing Yourself in Federal Court: A Handbook for Pro Se Litigants," drafted by Susan Y. Soong, Clerk of Court, 2017 Edition.



APPENDIX



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1	DOAH Handbook	TextBookDiscrimination.com/Handbooks/ProSe/DOAH/
2	FL Bar Handbook	TextBookDiscrimination.com/Handbooks/ProSe/FLBar/
3	USCA11 Handbook	TextBookDiscrimination.com/Handbooks/ProSe/CA11/
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