



LEGAL TERMS IN PLAIN TERMS

What do these common legal terms mean in plain language?

On cert or grant cert:

When the Supreme Court agrees to hear a case. Like saying “yes, we’ll review this case.”

En banc:

When all the judges in a court hear a case together, instead of just a few of them. It’s like getting the whole team together instead of just some players. One of the parties does not like the decision so they ask for all the judges to review their case and give a decision.

Summary judgment:

When a judge decides a case quickly without a full trial because the facts are clear and there’s no real dispute to solve.

Stay:

A pause button for legal orders. When a court says “wait, stop everything for now” while they think about things more. If a “stay” is placed on a judge’s decision, then the decision is not yet in effect.

Injunction:

When a court orders someone to stop doing something (or sometimes to start doing something). Like a referee saying, “you must stop that behavior right now.” A judge or a panel of judges may stop the enforcement of a law by placing an injunction. An injunction is usually temporary and happens before a judge’s final decision.

Petition for cert/Petition for writ of certiorari:

Both mean the same thing. It’s when lawyers ask the Supreme Court to look at their case. Like raising your hand and saying, “please review our case.”

Facial challenge:

When someone says a law is wrong just by looking at how it’s written, without waiting to see how it works in real life. Like saying a rule is unfair before it’s even used.

Vacated and remanded:

When a higher court cancels a lower court’s decision and sends the case back to them to try again. Like a teacher saying “redo this homework.” If a lower court makes a decision and the higher court doesn’t agree with the decision, it will be “vacated and remanded” back to the lower court.



LEGAL TERMS IN PLAIN TERMS (CONTINUED)

GVR:

Stands for “Grant, Vacate, and Remand.” It’s when the Supreme Court agrees to look at a case, cancels the lower court’s decision, and sends it back. Like saying “try again with these new instructions.”

Interlocutory:

It means a lack of finality. For example: An interlocutory decree is a judgment that does not settle all issues of a case because further action by the court is needed to settle the controversy. There may be a temporary decision on a piece of a lawsuit, but it is not the final decision, and it does not cover all the matters in the case.

Distributed for conference:

When the Supreme Court gives copies of a case to all the Justices to read before they meet to talk about it. Like passing out homework before a class discussion.

Go to conference/Conference this case:

When the Supreme Court Justices meet privately to discuss and vote on cases. Like having a private team meeting to make decisions.