

Law and the Legal System

Lesson Objectives

- To understand what the role of law is in society
- To distinguish criminal and civil legal systems
- To examine alternative means of resolving disputes



Why do we need laws?

Think of as many reasons as you can why most societies have laws and a legal system.

- To prevent anti-social and unacceptable behaviour
- To regulate commercial and business transactions
- To identify who should rightfully own property
- To regulate family and personal relationships
- To provide means for citizens to resolve disputes with other citizens

These are some of the most important but you may have thought of others

What is the law concerned with

Which of the following does the law concern itself with?

- Going to school
- Helping your parents around the house
- Catching a bus
- Doing a part time job
- Babysitting your younger brother or sister
- Buying goods from a shop
- Surfing the internet

The distinctions between Civil Law and Criminal Law



There are basically two types of law:

Civil law &
Criminal law

Civil Law

Civil law is concerned with the rights and duties of citizens in dealings with other citizens

Civil law therefore covers activities such as:

- **Lending and borrowing money**
- **Entering into contracts**
- **Disputes with neighbours**
- **Getting married**
- **Inheritances and wills**



Criminal Law

Criminal offences are regarded as offences against society

It deals with such matters such as:

Crimes against the person

- eg murder, assault & rape

Property crimes

- eg theft, burglary, fraud and vandalism



Compensation or punishment?

- In **civil law** the courts award **compensation** where someone can prove the other party is in the wrong.
- In **criminal courts** the aim is **to punish** wrongdoers and impose a sentence which prevents them from reoffending

