Your notes

GCSE Citizenship Studies: revision notes

The justice system

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Criminal courts

- All criminal cases start in a **magistrates' court**. Magistrates are usually trained volunteers (lay magistrates) who sit in twos or threes; some courts have a paid district judge instead. They deal with less serious (summary) offences.
- Serious (indictable) offences, such as murder, go to the **Crown Court**, with a judge and a **jury** of 12. The **jury** decides guilt; the judge decides the sentence.
- Youth courts deal with 10- to 17-year-olds and are less formal.
- Appeals go to higher courts: the Court of Appeal and, finally, the **Supreme Court**, the UK's highest court (since 2009).

Civil justice

- Civil cases are heard in county courts or the High Court. Tribunals handle specialist disputes, such as employment.
- Alternative dispute resolution avoids court: **mediation** (a neutral person helps both sides agree) and arbitration (a neutral person makes a binding decision).

People in the justice system

- The police investigate crime and arrest suspects. The **Crown Prosecution Service** (CPS) decides whether to prosecute.
- Solicitors give legal advice; barristers argue cases in the higher courts. Judges run trials and interpret the law.
- **Legal aid** helps people who can't afford legal advice. A suspect's rights include the right to free legal advice and to remain silent.

Sentencing

- Aims of sentencing: punishment, deterrence, **rehabilitation**, protecting the public and reparation (making amends).

- Sentences include fines, community sentences, suspended sentences and prison. Youth sentences focus on **rehabilitation**.

Key terms

Magistrates' court	The court where all criminal cases start.
Crown Court	The court for serious criminal cases, with a judge and jury.
Jury	12 members of the public who decide guilt in the Crown Court.
Supreme Court	The UK's highest court of appeal.
Crown Prosecution Service	The body that decides whether to prosecute.
Mediation	A neutral person helping two sides reach agreement.
Legal aid	Government help with legal costs.
Rehabilitation	Helping offenders change so they don't reoffend.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Where do all criminal cases start?
2. How many people sit on a jury?
3. Who decides the sentence in the Crown Court?
4. What is the UK's highest court?
5. Who decides whether to prosecute a suspect?
6. What is mediation?
7. What is rehabilitation?
8. Which court deals with 10- to 17-year-olds?

Answers

1. The magistrates' court
2. 12
3. The judge
4. The Supreme Court
5. The Crown Prosecution Service
6. A neutral person helping two sides reach agreement
7. Helping offenders change so they don't reoffend
8. The youth court

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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