Your notes

GCSE Citizenship Studies: revision notes

Rights, responsibilities and the law

Contents

1. Rights and responsibilities
2. Sources and types of law
3. Rights at different ages
4. The Equality Act 2010
5. Key terms
6. Quick questions
7. What to do next

Rights and responsibilities

- A **right** is something you are entitled to, such as freedom of speech. A **responsibility** is something you are expected to do, such as obeying the law or respecting others' **rights**.
- **Rights** can conflict: one person's freedom of speech may conflict with another's **right** to privacy or freedom from discrimination. Courts balance them.
- **Rights** have developed over time, from Magna Carta (1215) to the Human **Rights** Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

Sources and types of law

- **Statute law** is made by Parliament (Acts of Parliament). **Common law** (case law) is made by judges' decisions, which set **precedents** for later cases.
- **Criminal law** deals with offences against society, such as theft or assault. The state prosecutes, and the defendant can be punished. Guilt must be proved beyond reasonable doubt.
- **Civil law** deals with disputes between people or organisations, such as contracts, divorce or compensation. The claimant sues the defendant, and the case is decided on the balance of probabilities.

Rights at different ages

- The age of criminal **responsibility** in England and Wales is 10; in Scotland it is 12.
- At 16 you can leave school (but must stay in education or training until 18 in England), work part-time and consent to medical treatment. At 18 you can vote in general elections, serve on a jury and buy alcohol.

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The Equality Act 2010

- It protects people from discrimination because of nine **protected characteristics**: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Key terms

Right	Something a person is entitled to.
Responsibility	Something a person is expected to do.
Statute law	Law made by Parliament.
Common law	Law made by judges' decisions in cases.
Criminal law	Law dealing with offences against society.
Civil law	Law dealing with disputes between people or organisations.
Precedent	A past court decision followed in later similar cases.
Protected characteristic	A characteristic protected from discrimination by the Equality Act 2010.

Quick questions

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

1. What is statute law?
2. What is common law?
3. What does criminal law deal with?
4. What is the standard of proof in a criminal case?
5. What is the age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales?
6. How many protected characteristics are in the Equality Act 2010?
7. Which is a protected characteristic?
8. Which is a civil law case?

Answers

1. Law made by Parliament
2. Law made by judges' decisions
3. Offences against society, such as theft
4. Beyond reasonable doubt
5. 10
6. 9
7. Religion or belief
8. A dispute over a broken contract

Your notes

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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