

The Supreme Court of the United States

The Supreme Court of the United States is the highest court in America. Unlike most courts, it does not decide on the facts of a case – there are no witnesses, no prosecutor, no guilty plea, and no sentence, only lawyers. Instead, its judicial role is to decide on what the law means – to interpret the intent of the legislature.

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Although it is the nation's highest court, its jurisdiction does not cover every case in the US. Each state has its own supreme court that interprets state law, and the US Supreme Court cannot review these unless they conflict with the US constitution.

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The Supreme Court has made many landmark decisions – both good and bad. A decision in 1896 was the justification for 60 years of segregation of white and black people before another decision reversed that ruling. More recently, despite the court being quite conservative, its interventions have been rather liberal, including overturning Trump's ban on Muslim immigration and, only last week, banning employment discrimination against gay people.

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As the final arbiter of the law, its decisions will obviously be controversial – one side always loses – but the decisions of the nine judges will nevertheless continue to impact American society.

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What is the role of the US Supreme Court?

When did the Court decide that racial segregation was legal?

How many judges are there on the Supreme Court?