

Who's who in the courtroom

Solicitor

The solicitor sits facing the barrister and instructs the barrister during the case. The solicitor works with the barrister and the client preparing the case and collecting the evidence. Like barristers, solicitors can argue the client's case in court, state the relevant law and examine witnesses.

Jury

The jury sits together on one side of the courtroom where jurors have a clear view of the judge and any witnesses. A jury consists of twelve men and women randomly selected from the electoral register. Most people between 18 and 70 who are registered to vote are eligible for jury duty. The jury hears the evidence and decides on the guilt or innocence of the accused in a criminal case and which party wins in a civil case.

Registrar / Court Clerk

The registrar/court clerk sits in front of the judge and records any orders made by him/her. He/she assists the judge with administrative matters and is in charge of the court documents and exhibits. The registrar/court clerk also records the names of the witnesses, swears in the jury, administers the oath to witnesses and records the decision in the case.

Judge

The judge is in charge of court proceedings and decides any legal issues arising in the case. If the case does not involve a jury, the judge also decides questions of fact, such as the guilt or innocence of the accused, or which party wins in a civil case. The judge wears a gown and sits at a bench above the other people in the court.

Digital Audio Recording (DAR) box

Everything that is said in court during the case, including any evidence given by the witnesses, is recorded digitally.

Witness

The witness sits to one side of the judge and gives testimony in open court. Witnesses are called by either party to prove their side of the story and may be cross-examined by the opposing party as to the accuracy of their evidence.

Judicial Assistant

The judicial assistant works with the judge. Among his/her duties is to undertake legal research for the judge and to announce the arrival and departure of the judge from the courtroom (usually by saying 'all rise').

Accused

The accused comes before the court accused of a crime. If the accused is in custody he/she will be brought to court by a prison officer.

Prison Officer

The prison officer brings an accused person (who is in custody) to the courtroom and sits with him/her. The prison officer wears a uniform.

Solicitors

Counsel

Counsel

Barrister / Counsel

The barristers in the case are known as 'counsel'. They face the judge and any witnesses. The barrister's role is to argue his/her case, to state the relevant law and to examine any witness on the evidence which they give to the court. The solicitor hires the barrister, who traditionally has few direct dealings with the client before the case begins. The barrister wears a gown.

Members of Public

Anyone can watch any court case, except where there is a sign reading 'in camera' on the door of the courtroom. This means that the case will be heard in private and that members of the public who are not involved in the case are not allowed into the courtroom. The 'in camera' rule is used to protect the privacy of the people in court mainly in family law matters and in some criminal cases (e.g. rape cases or cases before the juvenile courts).

Note

The above illustration represents a court hearing in a criminal case. It is for explanatory purposes only and does not purport to represent every, or any particular, courtroom.



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
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