



# The U.S. Supreme Court

The Supreme Court of the United States is the highest court in the country. It is the final court in all federal court cases and all state court cases that involve federal issues.

The Supreme Court was established in Article III of the Constitution. The court is presided over by one chief justice and eight associate justices.

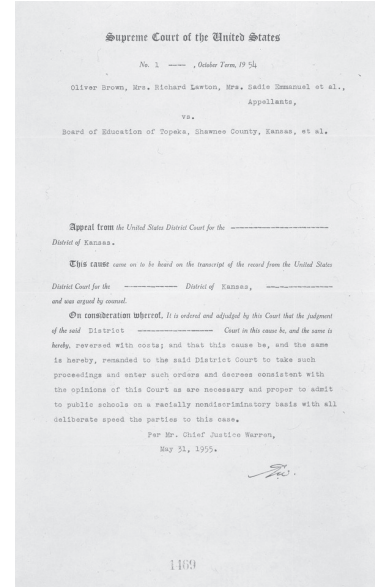
The U.S. Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C.

Each justice serves a life tenure, although a justice may resign or be removed through impeachment.

Justices are nominated by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. This process involves all three branches of the federal government. It is part of “checks and balances,” the safeguards set forth in the Constitution to prevent one branch of government from becoming too powerful.

The role of the Supreme Court has evolved over the years. Originally, the court heard very few cases. Currently, the court hears between 50-85 cases a year.

The Supreme Court rulings on major cases, called landmark cases, have had a profound impact on the U.S. The ruling in *Miranda v. Arizona* in 1966 required that all criminal suspects be advised of their rights. *Gideon v. Wainwright* in 1963 guaranteed a criminal defendant the right to legal counsel. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954 ended racial segregation in schools.



The 1954 Supreme Court judgment on *Brown v. Board of Education* which desegregated the public schools.

## QUICK QUIZ

Fill in the blank with the correct answer.

What are checks and balances?

**the safeguards to keep one branch from having too much power**

Who nominates a Supreme Court justice?

**the President**

What is a landmark case?

**a major case**

What document established the Supreme Court?

**the Constitution**

What did the ruling in *Gideon v. Wainwright* guarantee?

**right to legal counsel**

How many justices are on the Supreme Court?

**nine**

What case desegregated the public schools?

**Brown v. Board of Education**

Who confirms a Supreme Court justice?

**U.S. Senate**