A **statute** is a formal written enactment of a [legislative](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislature) body,[[1]](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statute#cite_note-Blacks-1) a stage in the process of [legislation](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislation). Typically, statutes command or prohibit something, or declare [policy](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_policy).[[1]](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statute#cite_note-Blacks-1) Statutes are laws made by legislative bodies; they are distinguished from [case law](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Case_law) or [precedent](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precedent), which is decided by [courts](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Court), [regulations](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regulations) issued by [government agencies](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_agencies), and [oral](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_law) or [customary law](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Customary_law).[[1]](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statute#cite_note-Blacks-1)[[2]](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statute#cite_note-2)[[*better source needed*](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ANOTRS)] Statutes may originate with the legislative body of a country, state or province, county, or [municipality](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Municipality).

In virtually all countries, newly enacted statutes are published and distributed so that everyone can look up the statutory law. This can be done in the form of a [government gazette](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_gazette) which may include other kinds of legal notices released by the government, or in the form of a series of books whose content is limited to legislative acts. In either form, statutes are traditionally published in chronological order based on date of enactment.

A universal problem encountered by lawmakers throughout human history is how to organize published statutes. Such publications have a habit of starting small but growing rapidly over time, as new statutes are enacted in response to the exigencies of the moment. Eventually, persons trying to find the law are forced to sort through an enormous number of statutes enacted at various points in time to determine which portions are still in effect.

The solution adopted in many countries is to organize existing statutory law in topical arrangements (or ["codified"](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codification_%28law%29)) within publications called [codes](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_%28law%29), then ensure that new statutes are consistently drafted so that they add, amend, repeal or move various code sections. In turn, in theory, the code will thenceforth reflect the current cumulative state of the statutory law in that jurisdiction. In many nations statutory law is distinguished from and subordinate to [constitutional law](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_law).

### International law

[**edit**](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Statute&action=edit&section=3)

The term **statute** is also used to refer to an International [treaty](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty) that establishes an [institution](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institution), such as the Statute of the [European Central Bank](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Central_Bank), a protocol to the international courts as well, such as the Statute of the [International Court of Justice](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Court_of_Justice) and the Rome Statute of the [International Criminal Court](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Criminal_Court). Statute is also another word for law. The term was adapted from England in about the 18th century.

### Autonomy statute

[**edit**](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Statute&action=edit&section=4)

In the [autonomous communities of Spain](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_communities_of_Spain), an autonomy statute is a legal document similar to the constitution of a [federated state](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federated_state), save that it is enacted by the national legislature, rather than the autonomous community it governs. The autonomy statutes in Spain have the rank of *ley orgánica* (organic law), a category of special legislation reserved only for the main institutions and issues and mentioned in the constitution (the highest ranking legal instrument in Spain). *Leyes orgánicas* rank between the constitution and ordinary laws. The name was chosen, among others, to avoid confusion with the term *constitution* (i.e. the Spanish constitution of 1978).

# Public and private bills

Proposed [bills](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_%28proposed_law%29) are often categorized into **public bills** and **private bills**. A public bill is a proposed [law](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law) which would apply to everyone within its [jurisdiction](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jurisdiction). A private bill is a proposal for a law affecting only a single person, group, or area, such as a bill granting a named person [citizenship](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizenship) or, previously, granting named persons a legislative [divorce](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce).

Private law can afford relief from another law, grant a unique benefit or powers not available under the general law, or relieve someone from legal responsibility for some allegedly wrongful act. There are many examples of such private law in [democratic](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy) countries, although its use has changed over time. A private bill is not to be confused with a [private member's bill](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_member%27s_bill), which is a bill introduced by a "private member" of the legislature rather than by the [ministry](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_%28collective_executive%29).

In modern practice, private bills are mixed and have both private and public aspects. In such cases the proposed legislation is called a [hybrid bill](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hybrid_bill).[[1]](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_and_private_bills#cite_note-1) Some public laws set out such narrow terms of applicability that they apply to only one person or organization, making them *de facto* private laws. This may be used (successfully or unsuccessfully) to get around prohibitions on certain kinds of public laws.

# Organic law

An **organic law** is a [law](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law), or system of laws, that form the foundation of a [government](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government), [corporation](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporation) or any other organization's body of rules. A [constitution](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution) is a particular form of organic law.

# Super statutes

The term ***super statute*** was applied in 2001 by [William Eskridge](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Eskridge) and [John Ferejohn](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ferejohn) to characterize an ordinary statute whose effort "to establish a new normative or institutional framework ... 'stick[s]' in the public culture" and has "a broad effect on the law".[[1]](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Super_statute#cite_note-SS-1) As a result, it has a "quasi-constitutional" significance that exceeds its formal status as a statute.

# Constitution

A **constitution** is the aggregate of fundamental [principles](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principle) or established [precedents](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precedent) that constitute the [legal](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal) basis of a [polity](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polity), [organization](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization) or other type of [entity](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_entity), and commonly determines how that entity is to be governed.[[1]](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution#cite_note-1)

# Statutory interpretation

**Statutory interpretation** is the process by which courts interpret and apply [legislation](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislation). Some amount of interpretation is often necessary when a case involves a [statute](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statute). Sometimes the words of a statute have a plain and a straightforward meaning. But in many cases, there is some [ambiguity](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambiguity) in the words of the statute that must be resolved by the judge. To find the meanings of statutes, judges use various tools and methods of statutory interpretation, including traditional canons of statutory interpretation, legislative history, and purpose. In [common law](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_law) jurisdictions, the [judiciary](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judiciary) may apply rules of statutory interpretation both to legislation enacted by the [legislature](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislature) and to [delegated legislation](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delegated_legislation) such as administrative agency [regulations](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regulation)