

Two Types of Courts

Trial Court

- One judge conducts the trial.
- Jury or single judge decides the case.
- Lawyers present evidence. Defendants may represent themselves.
- Witnesses swear to tell the truth and then answer questions from lawyers.
- It is the first court to decide who should win in a dispute.
- It is the first court to decide whether or not a defendant is guilty.

Appellate Court

- A panel of several judges listens to and decides the case.
- It hears the cases that have been decided in a lower court or by an agency.
- No evidence is presented.
- Lawyers only make arguments.
- This court gives its decision in a written opinion, or order.
- All the trial courts under it must follow the appellate court's decisions.

****The United States Supreme Court has the final say; there is no appeal of a Supreme Court ruling. ****

