

Federal Judges FAQ

1. What are the different types of judges that serve at the federal level?

U.S. Supreme Court Justices
Court of Appeals Judges
District Court Judges

2. Are federal judges elected or appointed?

All federal judges are appointed. They are selected by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

3. What are the qualifications for being a federal judge?

There are no specific qualifications outlined in Article III of the U.S. Constitution for being selected to serve as a federal judge. However, members of Congress, who typically recommend potential nominees, and the Department of Justice, which reviews nominees' qualifications, have developed their own informal criteria.

4. Do federal judges belong to a political party?

No. Judges are non-partisan. In order to preserve the impartiality of the judges and their rulings, judges do not associate themselves with political parties.

5. If judges are appointed and not associated with political parties, how do we know where they stand on issues?

The job of a judge is to not have opinions on issues or preconceived stances on topics that may come before them in court. Judges must consider just the facts presented and apply appropriate laws without bringing their personal views into it.

6. How long do federal judges serve?

According to Article III, federal judges at all levels serve for life as long as they demonstrate “good behavior.”

7. What does the job of a federal judge entail?

Judges oversee various trials and hearings. In the district courts (trial courts), judges will facilitate the course of the trial, providing jury instructions if there is one and determining the acceptability of evidence and testimony. The other two levels of federal courts are typically appeals courts. Those judges and justices read briefs and listen to oral arguments to decide whether to affirm or reverse the decision of the lower court(s).

8. How do federal judges make decisions?

Federal judges make decisions and issue rulings using a variety of resources. First, they must examine the facts of the case and the arguments presented on all sides. Then, they must consider current state and federal laws, with federal laws having supremacy due to Article VI of the U.S. Constitution. Judges will review past precedence and case law established by prior rulings. Throughout the entire process, the U.S. Constitution must be the ultimate guide of their work.