

# Criminal Law Definitions

<b>Arraignment</b>	Arraignment is a formal reading of the charges against the defendant. In response to the arraignment the defendant will enter a plea of Guilty or Not Guilty.
<b>Arrest Warrant</b>	A document issued by a judge or magistrate that authorizes the police to arrest someone.
<b>Charge</b>	A formal accusation of criminal activity. The prosecuting attorney decides on the charges after reviewing police reports, witness statements, and any other evidence of wrongdoing.
<b>Civil Infraction</b>	An act or omission prohibited by law which is not a crime.
<b>Crime</b>	A crime is an act committed or omitted in violation of a law and for which punishment is imposed upon conviction. A crime can violate either federal law, or state law. For Kentucky, state laws are located in the Kentucky Revised Statutes.
<b>Defendant</b>	The individual accused of a crime in a criminal case.
<b>Deferral</b>	The act of the court suspending a charge or sentence pending the defendant complies with the stipulations placed upon them, or completes the diversion plan. Upon completion of the diversion the trial judge may drop the charges and clear the record of the defendant.

<b>Expungement</b>	<p>A court-ordered process in which the legal record of an arrest or a criminal conviction is erased in the eyes of the law. Although expungement generally removes the arrest or conviction from an individual's record, it may still be available to some government agencies. After the expungement process is complete, an arrest or a criminal conviction ordinarily does not need to be disclosed.</p>
<b>Felony</b>	<p>Felonies are considered the most serious types of crimes, and are punishable by more than one year in prison. Unlike misdemeanors, defendants convicted of felonies serve their sentences in a state or federal prison rather than a local, city, or county jail.</p>
<b>Fine</b>	<p>A sum of money which is required to be paid for the punishment of an offense.</p>
<b>Guilty</b>	<p>The state of being deemed responsible for the commission of an offense, either as a result of a plea or the adjudication of a judge or jury.</p>
<b>Indictment</b>	<p>An indictment is a formal accusation that a person has committed a crime. The state will present their case and evidence to a grand jury, who will determine if there is enough evidence to pursue charges.</p>
<b>Misdemeanor</b>	<p>A crime, less serious than a felony, which is punishable by fine, probation, and/or imprisonment in a city or county jail, typically for less than one year.</p>
<b>Parole</b>	<p>Parole is a form of early release of a prison inmate where the prisoner agrees to abide by certain behavioral conditions, including checking-in with their designated parole officers, or else they may be rearrested and returned to prison.</p>

<b>Pre-trial Conference</b>	A meeting of the defendant, defense attorneys, trial judge, and prosecution before a trial. This is an opportunity to file motions and discuss possible plea agreements.
<b>Probation</b>	A court-imposed sentence that subjects those convicted of a crime to stated conditions and restrictions, often instead of jail or prison.
<b>Prosecution</b>	The prosecuting attorney. The attorney represents the state in the case, and pursues the charges against the defendant
<b>Sentence</b>	Punishment in a criminal case. A sentence can range from a fine and community service to life imprisonment or death. For most crimes, the sentence is chosen by the trial judge; the jury chooses the sentence only in a capital case, when it must choose between life in prison without parole and death.
<b>Traffic Offense</b>	A violation of vehicle laws that is committed by the driver of a vehicle, while the vehicle is moving.