

Crime and punishment



The table below gives the names of some other types of crimes together with their associated verbs and the name of the person who commits the crimes.

| <i>crime</i> | <i>definition</i> | <i>criminal</i> | <i>verb</i> |
|--------------|--|-----------------|----------------|
| murder | killing someone | murderer | murder |
| shoplifting | stealing something from a shop | shoplifter | shoplift |
| burglary | stealing from someone's home | burglar | burgle |
| smuggling | taking something illegally into another country | smuggler | smuggle |
| arson | setting fire to something in a criminal way | arsonist | to set fire to |
| kidnapping | taking a person hostage in exchange for money or other favours, etc. | kidnapper | kidnap |

Here are some more useful verbs connected with crime and law. Note that many of them have particular prepositions associated with them.

to **commit** a crime or an offence: to do something illegal

to **accuse** someone of a crime: to say someone is guilty

to **charge** someone **with** (murder): to bring someone to court

to **plead** guilty or not guilty: to swear in court that one is guilty or otherwise.

to **defend/prosecute** someone in court: to argue for or against someone in a trial

to **pass verdict** on an accused person: to decide whether they are guilty or not

to **sentence** someone to a punishment: what the judge does after a verdict of guilty

to **acquit** an accused person of a charge: to decide in court that someone is not guilty
(the opposite of to **convict** someone)

to **fine** someone a sum of money: to punish someone by making them pay

to **send** someone to **prison**: to punish someone by putting them in prison

to **release** someone **from prison/jail**: to set someone free after a prison sentence

to **be tried**: to have a case judged in court.

Here are some useful nouns.

trial: the legal process in court whereby an accused person is investigated, or tried, and then found guilty or not guilty

case: a crime that is being investigated

evidence: information used in a court of law to decide whether the accused is guilty or not

proof: evidence that shows conclusively whether something is a fact or not

verdict: the decision: guilty or not guilty

judge: the person who leads a trial and decides on the sentence

jury: group of twelve citizens who decide whether the accused is guilty or not

Here are some more crimes. Complete a table like the one in B opposite.

| <i>crime</i> | <i>criminal</i> | <i>verb</i> | <i>definition</i> |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| terrorism | | | |
| blackmail | | | |
| drug-trafficking | | | |
| forgery | | | |
| assault | | assault | |
| pickpocketing | | | |
| mugging | | | |

Fill the blanks in the paragraph below with one of the verbs from C opposite.

One of the two accused men (1) at yesterday's trial. Although his lawyer (2) him very well, he was still found guilty by the jury. The judge (3) him to two years in prison. He'll probably (4) after eighteen months. The other accused man was luckier. He (5) and left the courtroom smiling broadly.

1 was convicted 2 defended 3 sentenced 4 he released 5 was acquitted

Talking about criminals

Note the collocations in these news clips.

The Judge, Mr Newell, said that Hickey was a **hardened criminal**¹ who had **committed** 12 serious **offences**. He ordered that Hickey should **serve a sentence of** at least 15 years in prison.

¹ someone who has committed a lot of crimes

The lawyer for the prosecution, Mr Arthur Larchwood, stated that Henry Banks was already a **convicted criminal**² when he was appointed chairman of the company but that nobody knew this fact. He had a **conviction for robbery** dating back to 1986.

² someone declared officially in a court of law to be guilty of a crime

The Justice Minister said that the men were not **political prisoners** but were **common criminals**³ who had committed **acts of terrorism**.

³ low class criminal, negative term

The judge said it was vital that anyone with a **criminal record**⁴ should not be able to get a job where large sums of money were placed in their care. Charles Amworth, 26, had served two years in a prison for **young offenders** ten years ago before working for the bank.

⁴ list kept by the police of someone's previous crimes

Politicians on crime

Politicians often make speeches about crime. Here are some extracts from recent ones.

“In the fight against crime we will not just target serious crime, but all crime, including street crime and vehicle crime, so that the streets will be safer for everyone.”

“If someone breaks into your house, steals your car, or robs you in the street, then of course you feel society has let you down. That’s why we’re determined to tackle crime.”



“We are doing everything in our power to **combat crime**. The **crime rate** has come down, and that is because we have put 10,000 more police officers on the streets and focused on **juvenile crime**¹, because that is where the problem begins.”

¹ crime relating to young persons not yet old enough to be considered adults

“This government is doing very little to fight crime. We have all had some experience of the recent **crime wave** in our cities, whether it is **petty crime**² or more serious offences.”

² crime not considered serious when compared with some other crimes

“The **crime figures** are the worst since 1995. We have had a **spate**³ of **burglaries** in this part of the city, **vehicle theft**, **drug abuse** and so on, and police have reported a **staggering increase** in the number of acts of **mindless vandalism**. It is time the party in power did something.”

³ large number of events, especially unwanted ones, happening at about the same time

Match the headlines from a local newspaper with the first lines of their stories.

1 JUVENILE CRIME RISING

4 POLICE TARGET VEHICLE THEFT

2 DRUG ABUSE SCANDAL

5 PENSIONER ROBBED

3 PETTY CRIME CONTINUES

6 CRIME FIGURES OUT TODAY

- a) 80-year-old Marianne Roberts had her house broken into and some money and jewellery stolen while she was asleep in front of the TV last night.
- b) An increasing number of young people are getting involved in criminal activity according to a report published yesterday.
- c) So many cars have recently been stolen in the city that the police are launching a special campaign to tackle the problem.
- d) A detailed report on crime in the UK is to be published later today.
- e) Small-scale robberies remain a significant problem in this area and police are concerned that the problem may soon become more serious.
- f) A number of TV celebrities have been named as having attended a party where illegal drugs were being openly used.

Fill in the gaps in this paragraph.

Police are concerned about the growing number of offences that are being (1) by young people in our town. They say that increasing numbers of youngsters are (2) into people's houses or (3) their cars. Indeed, police claim that it is probably young (4) who are to blame for the recent (5) of burglaries in our town. Police are proposing a special campaign to (6) the problem and are asking for the public's support in this (7) against (8) crime.

- 1 committed
- 2 breaking
- 3 stealing
- 4 offenders
- 5 spike
- 6 tackle/combat
- 7 fight
- 8 juvenile

Answer these questions.

- 1 Would you feel pleased or worried if there were reports of a crime wave in your area?
- 2 What sorts of crime might be considered as petty crime?
- 3 If the police are *targeting* serious crime, what are they doing?
- 4 What word could replace *tackle* in this sentence? *The police are doing all they can to tackle petty crime in the city centre.*
- 5 What does the phrase *an act of terrorism* mean?
- 6 Which of these words could complete the phrase *a spate of ...: robberies, young offenders, drug abuse?*
- 7 Give an example of mindless vandalism.