

# Pennsylvania's Unified Judicial System

**Article V of the PA State Constitution** established a pyramid-like structure for courts, closely resembling the federal system: all courts are to be "united" for the common good. Three **"Appellate" Courts** receive applications for the reversal of decisions (appeals) from the lower courts. The **Supreme Court** reviews appeals from the Superior and Commonwealth Courts. **Superior Court** handles appeals in criminal and civil cases from the Court of Common Pleas. **Commonwealth Court** handles original civil actions brought for or against the Commonwealth (PA State Government), and appeals from PA State agency decisions. Assigned by district, **Court of Common Pleas** are the most numerous courts and are trial courts of general jurisdiction. **Magisterial District Courts** help decide which serious criminal cases go to the Court of Common Pleas.

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