

# JUDGE



## SALARY

Administrative law judge ★★★★★  
Supreme Court justice ★★★★★

## INDUSTRY PROFILE

Fierce competition for open positions •  
Most jobs open only after a current  
judge finishes his or her term or retires  
• Length of appointments vary

## JOB DESCRIPTION

With infallible knowledge of the law and excellent research, writing, and decision-making skills, judges preside over and ensure fairness within courtrooms. Judges are employed by local, state, and federal governments to oversee a variety of cases, both civil and criminal. A highly sought-after role in the law profession, most judges are elected or appointed into their positions.



## AT A GLANCE



**YOUR INTERESTS** Law • Research and writing • English • History • Psychology • Sociology • Criminology • Politics • Decision-making



**ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS** A law degree is required for most judgeships. Some appointments are available for non-lawyers, but opportunities are scarce.



**LIFESTYLE** Judges typically work regular office hours, depending on the requirements of the court. Overtime hours spent researching are common.



**LOCATION** Judges spend the majority of their working hours in an office, at law libraries or research centers, or in the courtroom.

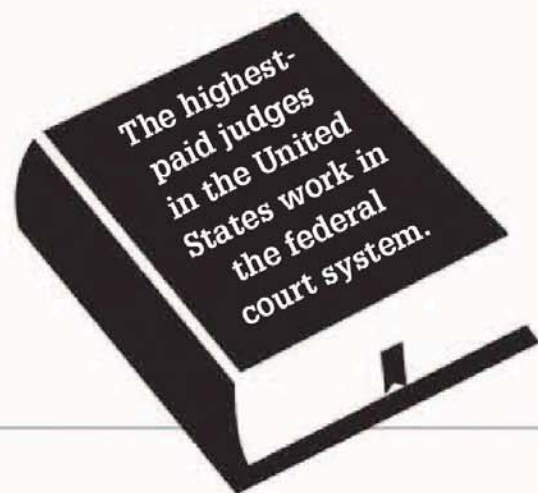
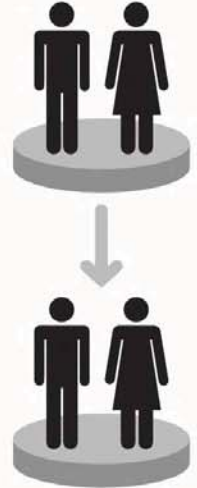


**THE REALITIES** Research hours are long. The work is often intellectually demanding, requiring a very thorough understanding of the details.

## CAREER PATHS

**GRADUATE** There are some hearing officer and administrative law judge positions available to those without a law degree. However, these opportunities are scarce and often filled by candidates with higher law qualifications.

**LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE** The most common route to becoming a judge is to graduate from an accredited law school and pass a state's bar exam, qualifying you to practice as a lawyer.



## ▼ RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **LAWYER** *see pp. 110–111*
- ▶ **ARBITRATOR** Resolves legal conflicts between two parties outside of the court system. Arbitrators meet with and listen to the disputing parties, then determine the outcome.
- ▶ **MEDIATOR** Facilitates legal discussions outside of the court system. Mediators, often also practicing lawyers, help the disputing parties to negotiate effectively until they reach a mutually agreeable decision.
- ▶ **PARALEGAL** Works on legal matters, but is not a lawyer. Paralegals are responsible for many tasks ranging from conducting research and preparing reports to contacting clients and witnesses and gathering and organizing evidence.

## SKILLS GUIDE



Excellent written and verbal skills and the ability to speak in court under high-pressure situations.



The ability to communicate clearly with lawyers, defendants, members of a jury, and others.



Good organizational skills for following multiple cases at once and managing court room staff.



Strong attention to detail for ensuring court room proceedings are carried out correctly.



Patience, perseverance, and mental stamina to preside over lengthy court sessions.



**LAWYER** Through years of practicing as a lawyer, you will gain the knowledge, courtroom experience, and professional contacts necessary to begin submitting your name to a judicial nomination commission for consideration as a judge.



**JUDGE** Newly appointed judges can expect to undergo specific orientation and training to ensure they are ready to serve. Typically, advancing as a judge means being appointed to judgeships within a larger jurisdiction. Career paths vary.



### LOCAL/STATE COURT

**JUDGE** Reviews cases at either the local or state level, serving as impartial deciders for the majority of civil and criminal cases. May preside over a small claims court.



### DISTRICT/FEDERAL COURT

**JUDGE** Hears cases involving the federal government or parties from different states. Federal judges must be nominated by the President and approved by a two-thirds majority Senate vote.



### SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

The highest-ranking judges in the country. The nine US Supreme Court justices review only a very small number of cases each year, all of which are determined to be of national importance.