



Inner Workings of the Supreme Court of Canada

Student worksheet

Use this worksheet to guide your thinking before, during, and after the video that you will watch. As you watch, focus on how the Supreme Court of Canada is structured and how it makes decisions.

Before you watch

Test what you know about Canada's top court by answering the following True-or-False questions.

1. The Supreme Court of Canada has 13 judges, one for each province and territory in Canada. _____
2. Supreme Court judges must retire at a certain age. _____
3. Judges are appointed based on their political views. _____
4. The Supreme Court is required to have equal representation of men and women. _____
5. Every case appealed in Canada is heard by the Supreme Court. _____
6. Judges are not allowed help from other legal professionals while reviewing cases. _____
7. Supreme Court decisions must be unanimous. _____
8. Judges discuss cases together before decisions are written. _____
9. The Supreme Court only hears criminal cases. _____
10. Supreme Court decisions are published in both official languages. _____

While you watch

1. The composition of the Supreme Court
 - a. How many judges sit on the Supreme Court of Canada? _____
 - b. According to law and tradition, where are Supreme Court judges appointed from? (Use the map to identify regions.)
 - c. What is the mandatory retirement age for Supreme Court justices? _____
2. Becoming a Supreme Court judge
 - a. What legal experience must someone have before they can be appointed to the Supreme Court?

 - b. According to the video, what is one quality that is important for Supreme Court judges to have?



3. How do cases come before the court?

- a. Does the Supreme Court hear every case that is appealed to it? yes ☐ no ☐
- b. According to the video, what kind of cases is the Supreme Court more likely to hear?

4. What happens after a case is heard?

- a. What do judges do after hearing a case in court?

- b. Why is discussion among judges an important part of decision-making?

5. Decisions and agreement

- a. Do all Supreme Court judges have to agree on a decision? yes ☐ no ☐
- b. Why is consensus still considered valuable, even when judges disagree?

After you watch

Discuss the following questions with a partner or write down your response.

1. One of the legal experts from the video, Adam Dodek, states that the court's job is not to find the best political answer, but the legal answer. Why might this distinction be important for how the Supreme Court operates?
2. Why might deciding cases of "national importance" place unique pressure on Supreme Court judges?
3. What's your opinion: Should courts explain their decisions to the public? Why or why not?