

A Supreme Court Hearing – Justices

The Supreme Court of the United States is the highest court in the land and the court of last resort. A decision by the Supreme Court is the law of the land. The Court, composed of a panel of justices, is asked to rule on a lower court's decision. There is no trial; no witnesses are called, and the basic facts in a case are not disputed.

The arguments to be presented can be based on the Constitution, the applicable law, and previous court precedents. The arguments do not need to be rooted in legal technicalities. In this activity you will be making a decision in the case.

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Your job is to:

1. Review the case and think of questions to ask the attorneys.
2. Select a student to serve as Chief Justice. He or she will be in charge of the hearing and call on the attorneys to present their arguments.
3. Listen carefully to the arguments and ask questions whenever you like.
4. Be sure to consider the impact of your decision on other situations that may arise in the future.
5. Discuss the case with the other justices and decide whether you think the decision of the lower court should be upheld or overturned. You do not have to agree. The decision will be based on the majority vote. There can be dissenting opinions.
6. Announce your decision and your reasons.