

# Skills for Living

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## Topic 8-3

# Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Citizen

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- In this topic, you will learn about the rights and responsibilities you have as a citizen
  - ❖ **To be informed**
  - ❖ **To vote**
  - ❖ **To obey the law**
  - ❖ **To pay taxes**
  - ❖ **To protect the environment**
  - ❖ **To be involved in your community**

# Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Citizen

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## Objectives for Topic 8-3

After studying this topic, you will be able to

- explain the importance of being an informed citizen and exercising your right to vote
- summarize the role of the court system in interpreting public and civil laws
- describe several types of taxes
- list conservation measures you can take to help protect the environment
- consider why community involvement is important to individuals, especially teens

# Topic Terms

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- ❖ public law
- ❖ misdemeanor
- ❖ felonies
- ❖ civil law
- ❖ progressive tax
- ❖ direct tax
- ❖ indirect tax
- ❖ volunteers

# To Be Informed

- **Right:** to be informed about the world around you
- **Responsibility:** to use the information to be an informed citizen

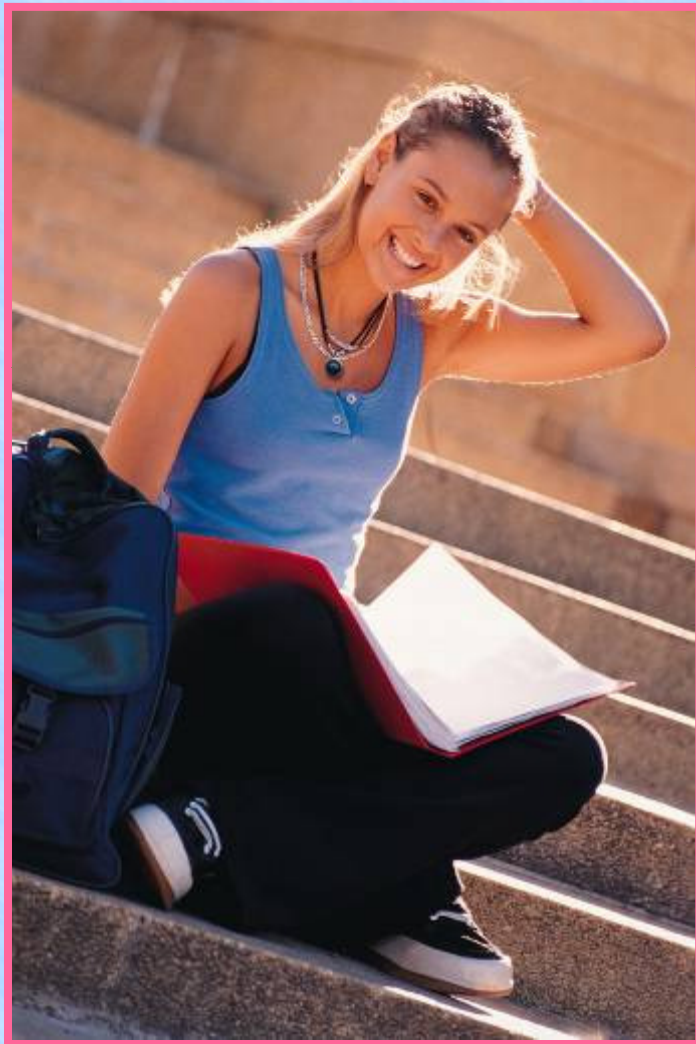


# To Vote

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- **Right:** to be able to help choose your government leaders
- **Responsibility:** to become informed on the issues and the candidates' views

# Registering to Vote



- If you are 18 years old and a United States citizen, you may register to vote

# Did You Know...

- For the year 2004, the number of American citizens
  - ❖ eligible to vote was 197 million
  - ❖ registered to vote was 142 million
  - ❖ who voted was 126 million
- Why do you think some people do not vote?

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



# To Obey the Law



- **Right:** to enjoy the benefits that laws provide
- **Responsibility:** to obey laws that govern your behavior

# Public Laws

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- *Public laws* govern the relationship between people and their government
- Criminal laws are a type of public law
- They protect citizens from acts that are considered wrong
  - ❖ The government takes the role of the *prosecution*, or accuser
  - ❖ The *defendant* is the person being charged with the crime

# Public Laws

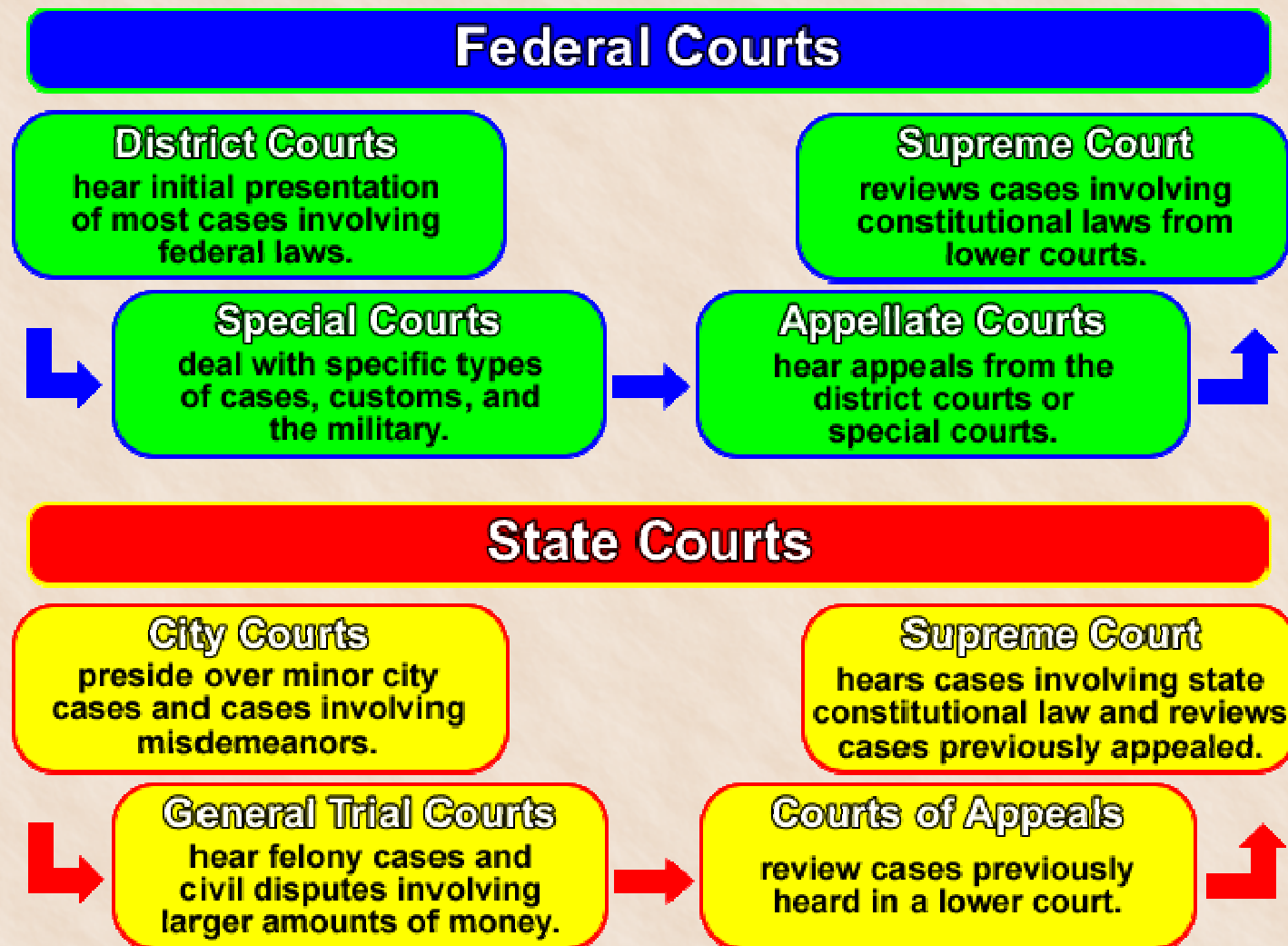
- Criminal cases involve two kinds of crimes
  - ❖ Minor criminal offenses are *misdemeanors*
    - speeding
    - disorderly conduct
    - petty theft
  - ❖ Serious crimes are *felonies*
    - rape
    - robbery
    - murder

# Civil Laws

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- *Civil laws* deal with disputes between private citizens
- When people do not resolve their disputes, the courts review and settle the disagreement
  - ❖ The *plaintiff* is the person making the complaint
  - ❖ The *defendant* is the person against whom the complaint is made

# The Court System



# Did You Know...

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- Crime in the United States accounts for more death, injuries, and loss of property than all natural disasters combined

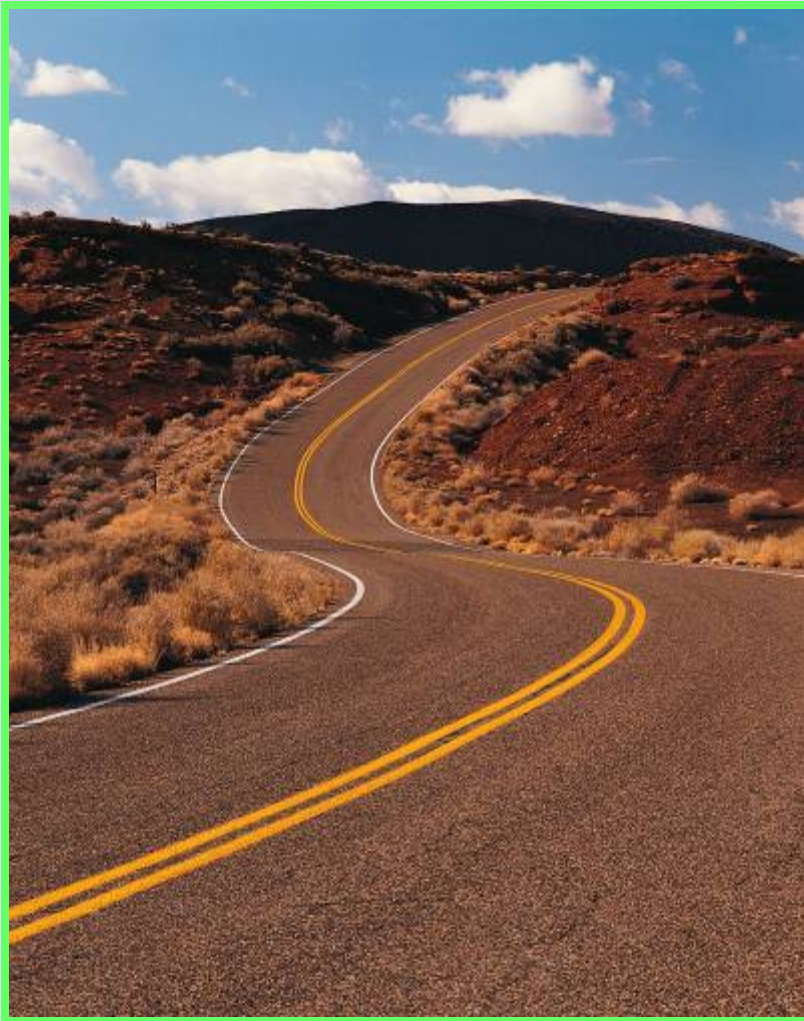
Source: The Disaster Center

# Discuss

- In which court do you think these cases would be tried?
  - ❖ speeding on a highway
  - ❖ riot
  - ❖ murder
  - ❖ divorce



# To Pay Taxes



- **Right:** to benefit from the services provided by tax dollars
- **Responsibility:** to pay taxes



# Types of Taxes

- ***Progressive taxes*** are those that increase as the item being taxed increases
  - ❖ income tax
- ***Direct taxes*** are those charged directly to the people who are to pay them
  - ❖ sales tax
- ***Indirect taxes*** are included in the price of the taxed items
  - ❖ excise tax on gasoline

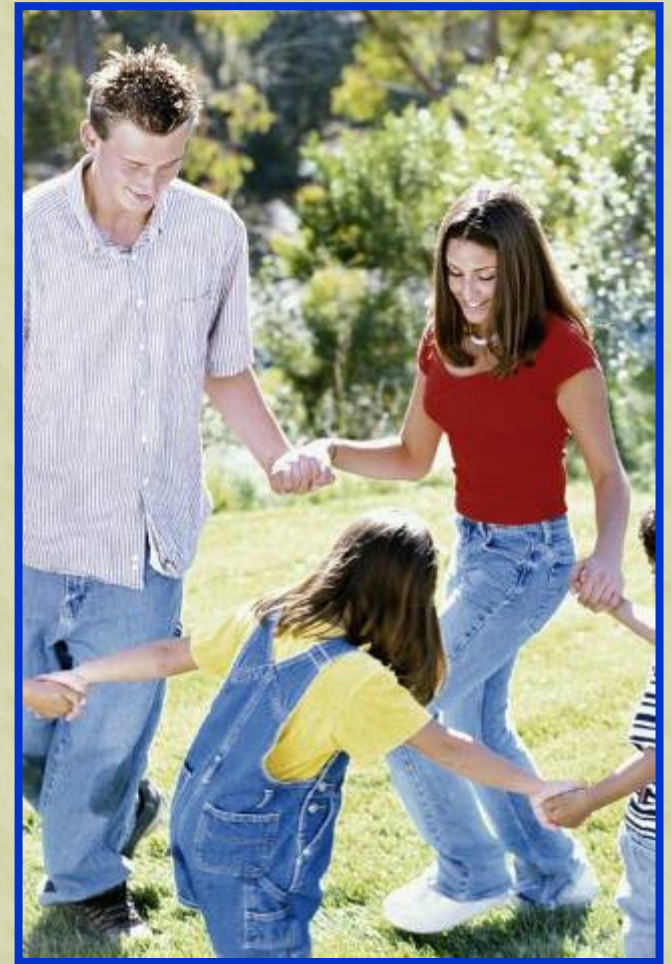
# To Protect the Environment

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- **Right:** to live in a clean, healthy environment
- **Responsibility:** to help keep your environment clean and healthy
  - ❖ Use environmentally safe products
  - ❖ Recycle product containers
  - ❖ Turn off lights and power-operated items when they are not being used
  - ❖ Walk, ride a bicycle, or use public transportation

# To Be Involved in Your Community

- **Right:** to benefit from public services and nonprofit agencies
- **Responsibility:** to become involved in the community by volunteering
  - ❖ ***Volunteers*** are people who provide valuable services by offering their time, talents, and energy free of charge



# To Be Involved in Your Community

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- Benefits of volunteering include
  - ❖ learning more about your community and your neighbors
  - ❖ determining your career interest
  - ❖ having experience to list on your resume before you obtain your first job

# Summary for Topic 8-3

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- As a citizen, you have the responsibility to
  - ❖ be informed
  - ❖ vote
  - ❖ obey laws
  - ❖ pay taxes
  - ❖ protect the environment
  - ❖ become involved in your community
- Volunteering allows you to give back to your community, gain experience, and make new friends