



Online Courses for High School Students 1-888-972-6237

Careers in Criminal Justice 1A: Introduction

Have you ever wondered what steps take place as people move through the court system? The criminal justice system is a very complex field that requires dedicated people willing to pursue equal justice for all. Explore different career choices and how the juvenile justice system, the correctional system, and the trial process all work together to maintain social order.

Prerequisite: None

Course Length: One Semester

Required Text: None

Required Materials

Physical

- Sharpened pencil
- Two sheets of plain white paper
- Clear tape (packaging tape works best, but any clear tape will do)
- Camera or device that can take pictures
- Video recording device like a phone or camera
- Poster board
- Markers
- Pencil
- Blank sheet of paper
- One piece of sturdy paper (optional)
- Scissors (optional)
- Coloring utensils (markers, colored pencils, etc.) (optional)
- Microphone
- Headphones

Software

- Graphic design tool (like Canva or something similar) (optional)
- Word processing software
- Slide presentation software
- Recording and editing software (e.g., **audacity** free version)

Other

- Friend or family member to act as a “criminal”
- Someone to act out a script with (optional)

Unit 1: Overview of Criminal Justice

Most people know that when we declared our independence from Britain in 1776, we became a nation of our own. Few people, however, realize that with our newfound freedoms came the burden of responsibility. No longer subject to the laws of the monarchy, early Americans had to come up with a new system of justice. One that would keep our citizens safe from harm. Thus, the criminal justice system in the United States was born. Over the years, the American criminal justice system has undergone many changes, and they continue to adapt to new challenges and societal demands. In this unit, we will explore the history and purpose of the criminal justice system as well as its many different parts.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Identify the goals of the criminal justice system
- Discuss the three main parts of the criminal justice system
- Describe several types of correctional institutions
- Discover other types of punishments outside incarceration

Unit 2: History of the Criminal Justice System

We often tend to look back on the past with rose-tinted glasses. Things seemed simpler “back then,” didn’t they? Did crime really have a place in society when our grandparents were young, or when our nation was young, or when human civilization as we know it was just being born? The short answer is: yes! Let’s trace the history of crime and criminal justice from our earliest human ancestors up to modern times.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Understand the factors that influenced crime and punishment in nomadic tribes and early agrarian civilizations
- Compare ancient Roman law and punishment to our current criminal justice system
- Discuss legal documents from early American colonial history
- Detail early American prison reform efforts
- Conduct debate on the causes of crime in American society

Unit 3: US Laws: Freedom versus Responsibility

At the very core of the criminal justice system is the law. We know that chaos that would ensue if there were no laws that citizens were expected to abide by. Laws create social order that (ideally) reflect social values. When offenders break the law, they must be punished. But there are so many types of laws and different punishments for violating them! Let’s explore different ways to classify laws and crimes and the sentences offenders might receive for violating those laws and committing crimes.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Identify characteristics of criminal and civil law
- Clarify elements and classifications of crimes
- Distinguish between federal and state laws and local laws and ordinances
- Trace how laws are made
- Discuss rights granted various Constitutional amendments
- Discuss rights granted various Constitutional amendments

Unit 4: Introduction to Careers in Criminal Justice

When deciding which criminal justice career path to go down, you'll need to look into several different factors, including the projected growth, what education is required, the duties of this role, and how much money you'll expect to make. You will also want to take an inventory of your personal characteristics and determine which position is your “best fit.” For example, if you are a compassionate person and love to help people who are trying to get their lives back on track, you might consider becoming a probation or parole officer. If you're more analytical and like to solve a good mystery, a career as a forensic scientist might be a better fit. Whatever you do, you'll want to do it with passion and strong ethics. Because after all, the whole point of the justice system is to stop the offending while protecting one and all!

What will you learn in this unit?

- Identify and describe career opportunities in the criminal justice system
- Examine the job duties and skills needed to excel in specific roles
- Consider the prerequisites for job entry into the criminal justice system
- Explore the salary expectations for entry level positions in the criminal justice system

Unit 5: Inside the Courtroom

Are you poised to enter a career in criminal justice? Maybe. But either way, all United States citizens may also interact with the criminal justice system when they are called to participate in jury duty. Understanding how a courtroom functions, by focusing on various court structures, each step of a trial process, and the roles and responsibilities of those involved, you will prepare yourself for to enter the criminal justice field, either as a professional or as a civil servant on jury duty. What's involved? We'll meet the people you'll run into in a courtroom and take a look at courtroom demeanor, as well as take part in a mock trial. You may proceed!

What will you learn in this unit?

- Describe the people in a courtroom
- Evaluate the pretrial process
- Discuss the parts of a trial
- Consider various post-trial processes and sentences
- Differentiate between the roles and responsibilities of the people involved in the trial processes
- Determine appropriate courtroom demeanor and participate in a mock trial

Unit 6: The Juvenile Justice System

Did you know that kids as young as seven used to be sentenced and imprisoned right alongside adults? Up until the Industrial Revolution, young children and teens were subjected to cruel and unusual punishments. While some young offenders are still tried in adult courts today, most young people who run into trouble with the law are dealt with by the juvenile justice system. There are several key differences between the juvenile justice system and the criminal justice system, but it wasn't always this way. By recognizing those differences and looking at how judges and courts have shaped today's juvenile justice system, we learn more about how to help at-risk youth avoid the cycle of the adult justice system.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Review the history of the juvenile justice system in the United States

- Identify the programs and agencies within the juvenile justice system and describe their roles and responsibilities
- Determine law enforcement procedures related to juvenile delinquency
- Analyze current trends in juvenile justice
- Discuss Florida's juvenile court system, including procedures and alternative programs

Unit 7: Correctional Facilities

Do you know what happens to a convicted criminal after they are handcuffed and escorted out of the courtroom? Not many people are aware of the reality of prison life. Even the shows that are centered around those who are “locked up” are filled with misinformation. Instead of relying on these types of shows, let's explore the types of correctional facilities employed by the US criminal justice system. We will also investigate the programs and procedures that seek to punish and rehabilitate prisoners and how these compare to systems of the past. You'll have the opportunity to evaluate the philosophy behind controversial ethical practices and decide for yourself which facilities and strategies are effective, and which do more harm than good.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Differentiate between local, state, and federal correctional systems
- Compare and contrast different types of prison and community-based programs
- Identify major correctional operations procedures and programs
- Debate issues concerning the rights of inmates
- Understand correctional reform and the responsibilities of correctional officers

Unit 8: People Skills in Criminal Justice

In the high-risk field of law enforcement, people skills could literally make the difference between life and death for both officer and suspect. As is probably clear by now, it takes a special kind of person to choose to enter the criminal justice field and to carry out the duties of their role well. These careers require a unique skill set, including specialized interpersonal and personal skills. Because the men and women in these roles interact with the public daily in an attempt to protect the safety of individuals, apprehend criminals, and investigate crimes, a high level of social intelligence and the ability to communicate effectively with others is critical. The good news is that even if you have decided that a career in criminal justice is not for you, you still stand to benefit from the things we'll discuss here. After all, employability skills are requirements for anyone who wants to be successful in finding and keeping a job of any kind!

What will you learn in this unit?

- Recognize personal traits that help one succeed in the criminal justice field
- Apply strategies for working well with others
- Consider personal stressors and evaluate methods for resolution
- Plan solutions for situations that require crisis management and conflict resolution
- Identify the interpersonal skills, work habits, and ethics necessary for ongoing employment in an environment that includes many different kinds of people