

Topic Page: [Felony](#)

Definition: **felony** from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

In criminal law, former term for an offence that is more serious than a misdemeanour; in the USA, a felony is a crime generally punishable by imprisonment for a year or more.

Summary Article: **felony**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(fĕl'ənē), any grave crime, in contrast to a misdemeanor, that is so declared in statute or was so considered in common law. In early English law a felony was a heinous act that canceled the perpetrator's feudal rights and forfeited his lands and goods to the king, thus depriving his prospective heirs of their inheritance. The accused might be tried by an appeal of felony, i.e., personal combat with his accuser, the losing party to be adjudged a felon (see ordeal). The appeal of felony was gradually replaced by rational modes of trial and was altogether abolished in England in 1819. In addition to the forfeiture of his property, the convicted felon usually suffered death, long imprisonment, or banishment. Death was an especially common English penalty in the 18th and the early 19th cent. To the list of common-law felonies—including murder, rape, theft, arson, and suicide—many others were added by statute. With the abolition of forfeitures in England in 1870 the felony acquired essentially its modern character. Felony is used in various senses in the United States. In federal law, any crime punishable by death or more than one year's imprisonment is a felony. This definition is followed in some states; in others the common-law definition is retained, or else statutes specifically label certain crimes as felonies. Other possible consequences of committing a felony are loss of the rights of citizenship, deportation if the felon is an alien, and liability to a more severe sentence for successive offenses. Felonies are usually tried by jury, and in some states the accused must first have been indicted by a grand jury.

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felony. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/felony>



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