



Civic Education – SS1 First Term



Week 9: Citizenship II

Topics:

1. Meaning of Law
 2. Types of Law: Private, Public, Criminal
 3. Differences Between Public and Private Law
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Lesson Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Clearly define **law** and its purpose in society.
 2. Identify and explain the major **types of law**.
 3. Understand the **functions of private, public, and criminal law**.
 4. Differentiate between **public law and private law** with real-life examples.
 5. Appreciate the role of laws in maintaining **order, justice, and peace** in society.
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1. Meaning of Law



Definition:

Law is a **system of rules and regulations** created and enforced by the government to **guide behavior and ensure order** in society.

Laws tell people **what they are allowed to do** and **what they are forbidden from doing**.

Without laws, a society would experience **anarchy**—a state of lawlessness and disorder where people do whatever they like without fear of consequences.



Key Characteristics of Law:

- **Made by the government** through the legislative arm (like the National Assembly).
- **Enforced** by the executive (police, law enforcement) and judiciary (courts).
- **Applies to everyone** equally regardless of gender, wealth, religion, or age.
- **Punishable** if broken.

Functions of Law in Society:

Function	Explanation
Maintains Peace	Prevents fighting, violence, and chaos.
Protects Rights	Ensures everyone can enjoy freedom, life, and property.
Resolves Conflicts	Provides peaceful methods (like courts) to solve disputes.
Promotes Justice	Ensures fairness by punishing wrongdoers and protecting victims.
Supports Government	Helps the government carry out its duties and policies lawfully.

2. Types of Law

Laws are grouped based on **who is involved** in a case and the **nature of the issue**. The major types of law we'll study are:

A. Private Law (also known as Civil Law)

- Deals with **disputes between private individuals or organizations**.
- It is concerned with protecting the **private rights** of citizens.
- The aim is usually **compensation** or **settlement**, not punishment.

Examples:

- A disagreement over land ownership.
- A broken contract between two businesses.
- Divorce or child custody case.

Remedies in Private Law:

- Payment of damages
 - Return of property
 - Court order (injunction)
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B. Public Law

- Regulates the relationship between the **individual and the government**.
- Ensures that the **powers of the government are used properly** and that citizens are protected from abuse.
- It includes laws such as:
 - **Constitutional Law** (rights and freedoms)
 - **Tax Law** (paying government revenue)

- **Administrative Law** (how public agencies act)

Examples:

- Challenging an unfair government policy.
 - Disputing a high or illegal tax charge.
 - Filing a case against police brutality or human rights abuse.
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C. Criminal Law

- Deals with **offenses that are harmful to individuals or society**.
- These laws are meant to **punish criminals and deter crime**.
- In criminal law, the government **prosecutes** the accused person on behalf of society.

Common Crimes:

- Armed robbery
- Murder
- Assault
- Internet fraud
- Drug trafficking
- Rape

Punishment under Criminal Law:

- Imprisonment
 - Fines
 - Community service
 - Death penalty (for capital crimes)
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Summary Table:

Type of Law	Deals With	Parties Involved	Example
Private Law	Individual disputes	Individual vs. Individual	Land dispute
Public Law	Government powers and citizens' rights	Individual vs. Government	Human rights abuse
Criminal Law	Crimes and punishments	State vs. Offender	Theft, murder

3. Differences Between Public and Private Law

These two branches of law are often confused, but they are **very different** in purpose and application.



Comparison Table:

Feature	Public Law	Private Law
Parties Involved	Government and Individual	Individual and Individual
Purpose	Regulates government actions and protects public interest	Protects personal rights and settles disputes
Enforcement	Prosecuted by the state	Initiated by the affected person
Punishment	May involve jail, fines, or restriction	Usually compensation or restitution
Examples	Challenging unlawful arrest or human rights abuse	Breach of contract or divorce case
Court Type	Constitutional or Administrative courts	Civil courts



Real-Life Examples:

◆ Example 1 – Private Law:

Chinedu rents a shop from Ifeoma but refuses to pay the agreed rent. Ifeoma takes him to court. This is a **private legal case** because it's a dispute between individuals.

◆ Example 2 – Public Law:

Ngozi is wrongly arrested by a government agency without any evidence. She sues the agency for violating her **right to personal liberty**. This is a case of **public law**.

◆ Example 3 – Criminal Law:

A young man is caught stealing in the market. He is arrested and charged to court by the police. This is a **criminal law** case, and the **state prosecutes** the offender.