Without assuming prior legal knowledge, books in the Directions series introduce and guide readers through key points of law and legal debate. Questions, diagrams, and exercises help readers to engage fully with each subject and check their understanding as they progress. This chapter discusses the actus reus elements of a criminal offence. The actus reus of an offence may involve an act or omission (conduct crimes); certain consequences being caused (result crimes); or the existence of surrounding circumstances (‘state of affairs’ crimes); it must be voluntarily performed. There is generally no liability for an omission to act. There are five exceptions: special relationship; voluntary assumption of responsibility; supervening fault; contractual duty or public office; and statutory duty. Where the defendant is charged with a ‘result’ crime, the prosecution must prove causation. An intervening event will break the chain of causation and the actus reus will not be established.
2. Actus reus

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