2. Introduction to Sources of Law and Court Structure

Each Concentrate revision guide is packed with essential information, key cases, revision tips, exam Q&As, and more. This chapter introduces the various sources of law before proceeding onto a discussion of the courts of England and Wales. The courts of England and Wales can be divided into numerous different classifications. There are three different ways that courts may be classified: criminal and civil courts, trial and appellate courts, and superior and inferior courts. In England and Wales, there is often thought to be a stark divide between criminal and civil courts. Criminal courts deal with individuals who have ‘allegedly’ committed a criminal offence and it is the role of the arbiters of fact to determine the guilt or innocence of a defendant based on the evidence presented before them. On the other hand, civil courts deal primarily with the resolution of private disputes between individuals. Such disputes can include matters of contract law, personal injury, and family law. However, the jurisdiction of some courts is not limited to one area of law, but rather is approachable for both substantive areas of law.