

What Evidence can be Accepted in a Courtroom?

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### What Evidence Can Be Accepted in a Courtroom?

It would be reasonable to say that evidence is one of the most crucial things when it comes to building a case and determining whether an accused committed a crime or not. In this regard, one cannot underestimate the significance of using proper evidence in the courtroom—namely because, without such an element, one can be misjudged. To decide what evidence can be used in a courtroom, it is essential to provide a general overview of what constitutes evidence as well as illustrate factors that determine the degree of admissibility of evidence. In such a context, factors like reliability and relevance proved to play a crucial role when both the prosecution and defense present their side of a case. In contrast, to portray a comprehensive picture, one should explore how specific elements, for instance, hearsay, misleading facts, and prejudicial information makes evidence inadmissible. The case of accepting evidence in the courtroom is about determining whether the information offered is reliable and relevant enough to be used to prove or disprove the guilt of an accused party.

#### **Background**

Before speaking about factors determining the admissibility of evidence in the courtroom, one should establish a particular context—namely, illustrate elements constituting the essence of evidence in the first place. From the broadest perspective, when it comes to criminal law, evidence is information used to prove the guilt of an accused party beyond reasonable doubt (Tran, 2018). When there is reasonable doubt and juries cannot reach a unanimous decision, a judge often concludes the case as a mistrial. When it comes to civil law, the role of evidence is determined by the standard of preponderance of information provided by both parties. One can say that in such types of cases, the evidence presented in terms of a standard is lower to the one

of criminal law (Tran, 2018). Another crucial factor determining information as evidence is about classification. Respectively, both in criminal and civil law, there are four types of evidence: demonstrative, documentary, real, and testimonial evidence (FindLaw, 2019).

Depending on the case and strategy the prosecution and defense employs each kind of evidence plays an important role, determining whether an accused side will be found guilty or not. It is apparent that while classifying and building up evidence, parties involved can use particular types of information available to them, thus determining which one is the most appropriate to construct a winning strategy.

### **Admissible Evidence**

When pondering upon factors concerning the admissibility of evidence, one cannot avoid mentioning elements like relevancy and reliability. There is a general rule that all irrelevant evidence should be deemed inadmissible.

### ***Relevancy***

Speaking about the characteristics of relevant evidence, such information should either prove or disprove crucial facts of a case. When evidence does not relate to the facts of a case, it is often deemed irrelevant, thus inadmissible (Tran, 2018). According to Rule 401 of Federal Rules of Evidence, “relevant evidence means having any tendency to make the existence of any fact that is of consequence to the determination of the action more probable or less probable than it would be without the evidence” (ASU Law, 2018). The degree of admissibility of evidence in the courtroom is determined by the degree such evidence supports or denies fundamental premises presented in the case. Importantly, when deciding what relevant evidence is admissible and what is not, it is crucial to indicate that even relevant evidence can be denied when it contradicts the

Constitution of the United States, Acts of Congress, and rules prescribed by the Supreme Court (ASU Law, 2018). Even when the evidence presented by either side is considered relevant, there are still loopholes to look for—something that can help either the prosecution or defense to deny relevant evidence offered by an opposing party. Such a strategy can be extremely crucial in the context of winning the case.

### ***Reliability***

Pondering upon the definition of reliable evidence, one should say that information is perceived as such depending on the degree of credibility of a source utilized as evidence. Importantly, among all types of evidence, the factor of reliability is the most vital when it comes to testimonial evidence (Tran, 2018). Plunging deeper into understanding the role of credibility in the context of evidence inadmissibility, it is crucial to note that the factor of credibility is often employed when either party intends to use technical, scientific, or another kind of specialized knowledge in the case. When the prosecution or defense appeals to witness testimonies—namely people providing an expert opinion concerning facts of the case—the reliability of statements of such individuals is something both parties should strive for. In such regard, the reliability of testimonial evidence, as well as its overall admissibility, should be founded on three fundamental premises. First, the testimonial evidence must be grounded in a sufficient degree of data or facts. Second, the testimony should be a product of reliable methods and principles. Third, witnesses providing statements must employ principles of reliability to the overall facts of the case (ASU Law, 2018). Therefore, speaking about testimonial evidence, when such is used in the case, reliability is the factor determining its admissibility.

### **Inadmissible Evidence**

Building up a case using vital evidence is an endeavor that must consider factors that can deem data and information as unacceptable. In general, when particular data, facts, and information are deemed as inadmissible, it means that such evidence cannot be used in the courtroom (Tran, 2018). In such a context, it is crucial to understand that evidence inadmissibility is a nuanced field of law because many rules determining the admissibility of evidence have an exception.

Even though it can be challenging to present a unified standard for making evidence inadmissible, there are several instances when the court can deny the evidence. First and foremost, a judge can deem evidence as ineligible when it is unfairly prejudicial. This means that when either side of the case appeals to facts or information that arouses the jury's outrage without providing any relevant material data, such evidence can be considered inadmissible. Another instance of evidence inadmissibility happens when there is information presented in a manner that wastes time (Tran, 2018). For example, when showing the character of a defendant, juries and the court do not need to hear testimonies of several dozen people saying the accused is typically an honest individual. Speaking about the inadmissibility of evidence, it is crucial to consider whether it leads to insights that can be applied to the case or it is misleading. Generally, information is deemed to be misleading when it draws the attention of juries or judge away from crucial issues raised in the case (Tran, 2018). In such a context, when determining whether the evidence is misleading, the prosecution or defense should illustrate whether facts or information presented are relevant to the facts of the case. Finally, when evidence is deemed as hearsay, it is often regarded as inadmissible in the courtroom. Testimony made outside the courtroom, directed toward proving the truth of the matter, is considered hearsay (Tran, 2018). However,

applying the hearsay principle, the prosecution or defense should be aware that there are over forty instances of exception (Tran, 2018). Therefore, it is apparent that when evidence is deemed as inadmissible, an opposing side should prove that the information that was used is either misleading, that it is wasting the court's time, unfairly prejudicial, or can be regarded as hearsay.

### **Conclusion**

Considering the above, when deciding whether evidence can or cannot be presented in the courtroom, it is crucial to appeal to factors deeming such evidence as either admissible or inadmissible. Specifically, speaking about when evidence can be accepted as a vital part of the case, one should focus on its relevance and reliability. Conversely, when information or data used in the case does not correlate to the facts of the case, is employed to waste the court's time, considered unfairly prejudicial or regarded as hearsay, such evidence cannot be used in the courtroom to prove or disprove whether an accused party is guilty or not. In such a case, the crucial part of the overall judicial process is to present evidence that is paramount for the facts of the case as well as makes everything possible to determine whether the data and information offered by the opposing party are admissible or inadmissible. Such a balance makes a trial objective and just.

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