

Topic Page: [justice of the peace](#)

Definition: **justice of the peace** from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

In England, an unpaid magistrate. In the USA, where JPs receive fees and are usually elected, their courts are the lowest in the states, and deal only with minor offences, such as traffic violations; they may also conduct marriages.

Summary Article: **justice of the peace**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

official presiding over a type of police court. In some states of the United States the justices, who are usually elected, have jurisdiction over petty civil and criminal cases as well as having such duties as the issuing of search warrants and the performance of marriage services. The justice of the peace was formerly of greater importance than he is at present. The establishment of the office throughout England in 1360 represented a further extension of royal authority to local government, especially to rural areas. The justices, selected from the gentry, enjoyed extensive administrative and police authority, and they had judicial power over most crimes. The office was established also in the American colonies, but by the latter part of the 19th cent. it had been relegated to a much less central role, especially in administrative areas, in both England and the United States.

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