



**CRITICAL THINKING**  
Can you think of laws that make your life better?

Also, all of the people involved in the felony can be charged with murder.

Is taking a life always a crime? The answer is no. Self-defense is not a crime. If a person is shown to have killed only because he believed his life was in danger, it can be called self-defense. However, self-defense must be proved in court, and this can be very difficult to do.

What are some other crimes against the person besides homicide? There are several kinds: **assault, battery, and rape.** All three are very serious.

Assault is an attempt or a threat to attack another person physically. Battery is unlawful or illegal physical contact by one person with another when the other person does not agree to it. For example, if one person threatens to beat up another, she has committed the crime of assault. If she also actually hits him, then she has also committed the crime of battery. You need to check the laws in your state for the exact definition of both assault and battery.

Rape is a very violent crime against another person. It happens when a person forces another person to have sex. Statutory rape happens when a person has sex with another person who is below the age of consent, or too young by law, to have sex. Many states have changed their rape laws to be called sexual assault laws. Rape is violent both in a physical and in an emotional way.

There are laws in some states that give great punishment for crimes committed against a person because of that person's race, religion, or sex. These are called **bias crimes.** Bias means to be against someone for no good reason. Other words for bias are prejudice and hate. For example, recently, a group of white youths attacked an African American child and painted her face with white paint. They were found guilty of assault. But they had also committed a bias or hate crime.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The Hate Crime Statistics Act was passed in 1990 and the FBI began to collect information on this type of crime. Racial bias is the most common reason for these offenses.

**Crimes Against Property**

What about crimes that harm things people own? You have already learned about crimes that harm people physically. Crimes against property happen when property is destroyed or stolen. For example, burning another person's property on purpose is called **arson.** Most states have laws against burning your own property, too! Doing damage or harm to someone's property on purpose, such as breaking windows, is an example of **vandalism.** Vandalism can be either a misdemeanor or a felony.

There are other crimes against property, too. For example, breaking into any building in order to commit a crime is called **burglary.**

Stealing or taking anything that does not belong to you is called **larceny.** Petty larceny is stealing something small, usually something worth less than \$100. Grand larceny is stealing something of greater value.

**White-Collar Crime:** White-collar crimes are called this because they are connected with business offices or political areas where many



The United States is the most violent nation in the Western world. Every two years, people with guns kill more Americans than died during the entire Vietnam War.



people supposedly wear shirts or blouses with white collars. White-collar criminals steal more than \$100 billion a year!

What are some kinds of white-collar crimes? **Embezzlement** is one. Embezzlement is taking property that you have been trusted to take care of. For example, if you work in a bank and take money from the cash drawer, you are guilty of this crime. If you write a check and sign someone else's name on it without permission, then you have committed the crime of **forgery**. Forgery means changing a writing or document in order to cheat someone of property.

A new kind of white-collar crime involves computers. A person can "break into" computer files just as a burglar breaks into a house. This is how people steal or get information that is private and does not belong to them. Information in computer files is like property.

**Extortion** is the threatening of others in order to get their property. For instance, the criminal might say, "I'll break your arm unless you give me drugs."

Did you know that receiving stolen property is also a crime? To buy something that you think may be stolen, either in a store or on the street, is a crime. Remember what a felony is and what a misdemeanor is. To receive stolen property is a felony if the stolen property is worth more than \$100. It is a misdemeanor if the stolen property is worth less than \$100.

What are crimes against public order and safety? Public order is what keeps streets safe, orderly, and peaceful. Most of the crimes against public order and safety are misdemeanors. Yet, there are almost a million arrests for these offenses every year! Disturbing the peace by making lots of noise or being drunk, helpless, or loitering (hanging out on a street or any public place) in a way that bothers other people can also be called a crime against public order.

**Crimes Against Society:** Laws are made to protect all the people in society. However, not everyone agrees on which laws best protect the most people. For example, some people think that taking drugs does not hurt society. Yet, it is a crime to have certain drugs, to distribute them, or to sell them. Some people believe that there is more crime because drug users commit crimes in order to get money to buy drugs. Others think that the drugs themselves drive people to commit crimes. What do you think? Can both of these be true?

### Juvenile Justice

**Juvenile delinquency** is an act committed by a juvenile that would be a crime if committed by an adult. A status offense is an act that is considered an offense when done by a juvenile, but not when done by an adult. Infractions or violations are not crimes. Yet, when done by an adult, they can sometimes result in that person being put behind bars.

There are special courts for juveniles called juvenile courts or family courts. The reason these courts were set up is that some people believed juveniles needed to be treated differently from adults. They thought



### CRITICAL THINKING

Some experts feel that young people are more violent today than ever before in history. Also, even though 80 percent of those arrested are male, more and more women are being arrested for crimes. Why do you think is so?

**DID YOU KNOW?** About 80 percent of all crimes are committed by males. Also, women who break the law do not often commit crimes of violence.

**EYE OPENER** The American Psychological Association says that the average child in the United States has viewed 8,000 murders and 100,000 others acts of violence on TV by age thirteen.



**CRITICAL THINKING**

Just because one crime is punished by a harsh sentence and another is punished by a lighter sentence, does it mean that the crime punished by a lighter sentence is any less wrong?

that juveniles could still change their behavior if they were helped instead of just punished.

Today, many people are worried about the increase in violent crime committed by youths or juveniles. They believe the juvenile courts have to change. They believe the courts need to punish guilty juveniles more often than before in order to protect society.

Finally, anyone who attempts or tries to commit a crime is guilty. It is illegal to try to shoot someone even if you miss. This means that the intent or plan of the shooter is as important as the result of the shooting.



*Workbook*

Self-Check p. 4  
Reality-Check p.5

**Understanding Chapter 1**

1. What is a crime?
2. What is the difference between a state law and a federal law?
3. What are the legal names for serious and less serious crimes?

Critical Thinking

(pages 4,5&6)

1. What laws ~~the~~ make your life better. How?
2. Why do you think more and more women are being arrested for crimes?
3. When is talking a life not a crime? Give an example.
4. What is a bias crime?
5. What is the difference between embezzlement and forgery?

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6. Do you think the violence on TV and videos contribute to more violence on the street?

7. Many people believe juveniles need to be treated differently from adults when committing crimes. What do you think?

chapter 1 (pages 4,5 & 6)

1. What are some other crimes against a person besides homicide?

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2. What is the difference between assault and battery?

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3. What are other words for bias?

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4. Buring someone's property is called what?

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5. What is vandalism?

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6. How is larceny different than burglary?

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7. What are white-collar crimes?

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8. What are two types of white collar crimes?

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9. Information on computer files is the same as what?

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10. What is extortion?

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11. Stolen property received by someone has to be worth how much to

be a felony? \_\_\_\_\_

12. What is public order? \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Most crimes against public order are what? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What are some activities that can be called a crime against public order? \_\_\_\_\_

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15. Laws are made to protect whom? \_\_\_\_\_

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16. How do some people feel about taking drugs as a crime? \_\_\_\_\_

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17. What is juvenile delinquency? \_\_\_\_\_

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18. What is a status offense? \_\_\_\_\_

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19. What is the reason for juvenile courts being set up? \_\_\_\_\_

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20. Why do more and more people believe that guilty juveniles need to be punished by courts?

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