

# PROCESSING CASES: THE U.S. SUPREME COURT

**Occurs throughout term**

**Court receives request for review**  
(8000 per year)

- Appeals (e.g. suit under Civil Rts or Voting Rts Acts)
- Certification (requests by lower courts for Answers to legal questions)
- Petitions for writ of certiorari (most Common request for review)
- Requests for original review

**Occurs throughout term**

**Cases are docketed**

- Original docket (cases coming under its original jurisdiction)
- appellate docket (all other cases)

**Occurs throughout term**

**Justices review docketed cases**

- Chief justice, in consultation w/ associate justices and their staffs, prepare discussion lists (approximately one-quarter of docketed cases)
- Chief justice circulates discussion lists prior to conferences

**Fridays**

**Conferences**

- Selection of cases for review, for denial of review
- Rule of Four: four or more justices must agree to review most cases

**Begins Mondays after Conferences**

**Announcement of Action on Cases**

**Clerk Sets Date for Oral Argument**

- Usually not less than three months after the Court has granted review

**Attorneys File Briefs**

- Appellant must file w/in 45 days from Court-granted review
- Appellee must file w/in 30 days of receipt of appellant's brief

**Seven Two-Week Sessions, from October through April on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays**

**Wednesday Afternoons, Fridays**

**Conferences**

- Discussion of cases
- Tentative votes

**Oral Arguments**

- Court typically hears four cases per day, w/ each case receiving one hour of Court's time

**Drafting and Circulation of Opinions**

**Assignment of Majority Opinion Writing**

**Reporting of Opinions**

- U.S. Reports (U.S.) official reporter system
- Lawyer's Edition (L.Ed.)
- Supreme Court Reporter (S.Ct.)West Publishing
- U.S. Law Week (U.S.L.W.)
- electronic systems (Westlaw, Lexis)
- Legal Information Institute ([www.law.cornell.edu/supct/](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/))
- findlaw.com (research for non-lawyers)

**Issuing and Announcing of Opinions**