

SCOPE

"These rules govern the procedure in **ALL CIVIL ACTIONS AND PROCEEDINGS** in the **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURTS**, **EXCEPT AS STATED IN RULE 81.**"

PURPOSE

"They should be construed, administered, and employed by the court and the parties to secure the just, speedy, and inexpensive determination of every action and proceeding."

...ALL CIVIL ACTIONS AND PROCEEDINGS

A civil action is "an action brought to enforce, redress, or protect a private or civil right; a noncriminal litigation" (Black's Law Dictionary, 10th ed). Civil proceedings are everything that follows from pursuing a civil action. Proceedings are governed by the remaining rules of civil procedure, grouped by title as follows:

TITLE Description	I Scope of Rules; Form of Action	II Commencing an Action; Service of Process, Pleadings, Motions, and Orders
III Pleadings and Motions	IV Parties	V Disclosures and Discovery
VI Trials	VII Judgment	VIII Provisional and Final Remedies
IX Special Proceedings	X District Courts and Clerks: Conducting Business; Issuing Orders	XI General Provisions

...UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURTS

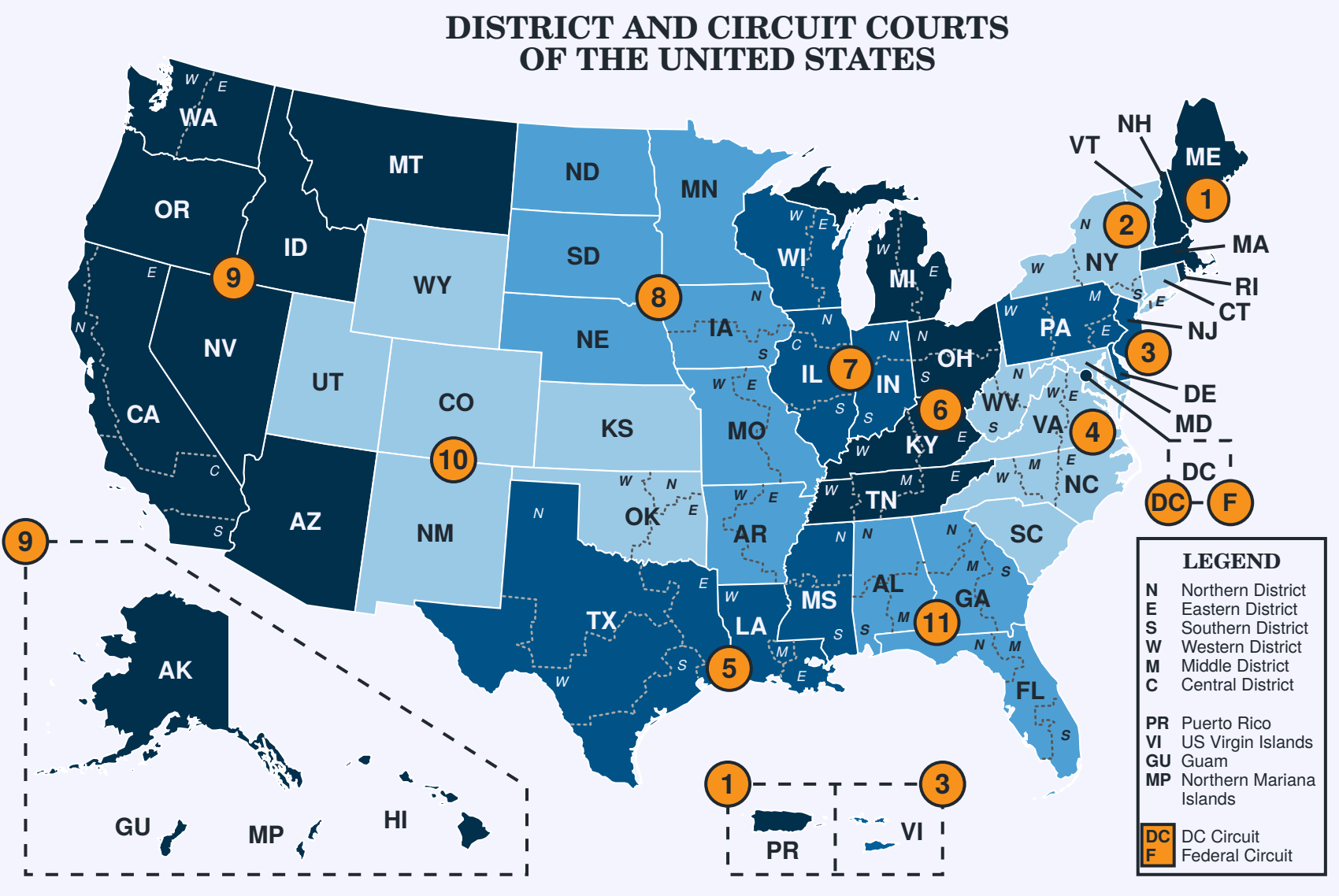
There are 94 district courts, organized into 12 regional circuits, plus a federal circuit. Cases tried at the district level can be appealed at the circuit level. This is why district courts are sometimes called trial courts and circuit courts are sometimes called appellate courts. Cases reviewed at the circuit level can be appealed to the Supreme Court.

District Courts

94 districts (including territories)
Most cases tried by one judge
Cases decided by a jury

Circuit Courts

13 circuits (1-11, DC, Federal)
Cases not retried, only reviewed
Cases decided by three judges



...EXCEPT AS STATED IN RULE 81

Rule 81 deserves more attention than can be paid here, but in short:

When civil action has begun, always check Rule 81.