

What Makes a Good Judge?

Handout 1

Directions

Assume you are appointed to a committee to determine what qualities should be used in selecting judges in your state. Review the list of qualities provided below the chart and categorize them under the most appropriate heading. Following the activity, develop a definition for a “good” judge.

Qualities to Consider in a Judge

ESSENTIAL & FORMAL REQUIREMENTS	DESIRABLE QUALITIES	UNDESIRABLE QUALITIES	UNNECESSARY QUALITIES

Qualities

- Aggressive
- Business background
- Bilingual
- Brilliant mind
- Christian
- Civil rights activist
- Clear thinker
- Collegial
- Concise writer
- Conservative
- Controversial
- Defense oriented
- Determined
- Democrat
- Distinguished lawyer
- DWI conviction
- Eminent legal scholar
- Ethnic minority
- Fair
- Family-oriented
- Female
- Feminist
- Follows party line
- Good campaigner
- Good fundraiser
- Good health
- Good looking
- Held public office
- Honest
- Humane
- Impartial
- Independent thinker
- Judicial experience
- Liberal
- Lobbyist
- Loyal
- Male
- Mediator
- Middle of the road
- Member of a gender specific group
- Old and wise
- Opposes higher taxes
- Opposes school prayer
- Pro death penalty
- Pro-environment
- Prosecution oriented
- Radical
- Religious
- Risk-taker
- Rural background
- Self-reliant
- Service to the public
- Single parent
- Strict constructionist
- Strong communicator
- Supports welfare
- Tough on crime
- Traditional
- Trial Attorney
- Trustworthy
- U.S. citizen
- Well-educated
- Youthful

Definition of a Good Judge

Adapted from “What Makes a Good Supreme Court Justice,” from a lesson by Debra Hallock Phillips, *Update on Law-Related Education*, Fall, 1989.