

Titles

Licensed attorneys in the United States may append a variety of titles to their names, most of which are intended to convey that the person is licensed to practice law in at least one jurisdiction. "Attorney," "attorney-at-law," "[Esquire](#)" ("Esq."), "lawyer," and "J.D." are all generally acceptable titles that an attorney may use. However, "J.D." may be used by anyone who has received the degree from a law school, regardless of whether or not licensed to practice law. Those who are not admitted to practice law, but nonetheless represent or imply they are an attorney, may be subject to penalties for the unauthorized practice of law or impersonating a lawyer, both of which are criminal offenses in many jurisdictions.

ABA Informal Opinion 1152 states that attorneys may use the title 'Doctor' in their function as attorneys and also states that:

"Today one must have 84 to 90 post-baccalaureate hours to receive a J.D. degree. A Master of Law degree calls for 110 to 120 post-baccalaureate hours. Comparing this to the 60 hours of academic instruction plus a written dissertation, required for a [Ph.D.], one must agree that the legal degrees are at least comparable."^[14]

The former ABA Model Code of Professional Responsibility provided under Rule 2-102 a J.D. recipient to use doctor with his or her name, the committee concluded in ABA Informal Opinion 1152 (1970).

The Juris Doctor may be regarded as a "doctorate degree of taught program", in contrast to a "doctorate degree of research program". Practicing U.S. attorneys who hold the J.D. do not often use the title "doctor", a term reserved by custom mostly to [physicians](#) (who, like lawyers, hold professional doctorate degrees) or a holder of an academic doctorate of a research program, usually a Ph.D. One explanation for the restraintive behavior might be that the former rules of professional conduct prohibited self-laudation. On the other hand, the [ABA](#) and many state ethics committees seem to endorse the use of the doctor title by JD degree holders.^[15] Occasionally, an attorney would be seen using the doctor title when he testifies as an expert witness.