MAXIMS OF LAW

Maxims of Law are fundamental, universally accepted principles of jurisprudence that guide legal reasoning, statutory interpretation, and judicial decisions. Similar to geometric axioms, they are concise statements—often in Latin—that embody natural reason, fairness, and foundational truth, and are frequently utilized by courts to ensure justicE

They serve to prevent legal deception, bridge gaps in written laws, and form the basis of both ancient Roman Law and modern Anglo-American Common Law.

Common Legal Maxims

These well-known principles are frequently applied in courts and legal studies.

- **Audi alteram partem:** *("Hear the other side.")* A principle of natural justice ensuring the right of the accused to be heard before a decision is made.
- **Nemo judex in causa sua:** *("No one can be a judge in their own case.")* A fundamental rule designed to prevent bias in judicial or administrative proceedings.
- **Ignorantia juris non excusat:** *("Ignorance of the law is no excuse.")* A rule stating that a person cannot escape legal liability by claiming they did not know a law existed.
- **Actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea:** *("An act does not make a person guilty unless there is a guilty mind.")* The foundational concept of criminal law that requires both a wrongful act and intent.
- **Res ipsa loquitur:** *("The thing speaks for itself.")* A legal doctrine applied in tort cases where negligence is so obvious that the facts themselves serve as proof.
- **Ubi jus, ibi remedium:** *("Where there is a right, there is a remedy.")* Guarantees that the violation of a legal right will be met with a legal remedy.
- **Volenti non fit injuria:** *("To one who consents, no harm is done.")* A defense stating that a person cannot claim they were wronged if they willingly and knowingly consented to the risk.
- **Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus:** *("False in one thing, false in everything.")* A rule that allows a court to completely disregard a

witness's testimony if they are proven to have lied about one material fact.

Why They Matter

Mastery of these maxims is considered essential for understanding the underlying logic of the legal system. They aid lawyers and judges in resolving doubts, interpreting statutes, and avoiding misinterpretations in legal arguments. In fact, many states have codified these maxims directly into their civil codes to provide a constant framework for legal evaluations.