

Interpreting Statutes

Law

How courts decide what legislation means.

Approaches and aids.

Approaches

Literal — ordinary meaning of the words

Golden — literal unless it gives absurdity

Mischief — what problem was it fixing

Purposive — what the provision aims to achieve

Aids to interpretation

Definitions within the Act itself

Headings and long title

Interpretation legislation

Prior case law on the section

Travaux and parliamentary material, where admissible

Educational reference. Which approach dominates, and which extrinsic materials are admissible, varies by jurisdiction.