

What is an expert?

We often see actors playing experts on television, particularly in criminal investigation drama series. An expert is an authority who has specialised knowledge and/or experience in any field. Experts are often hired as consultants and as expert witnesses. They may be asked to evaluate the facts, give an informed opinion or recommend a course of action suitable to the situation. If they are called as an expert witness in a court case, their opinion is often given as sworn testimony, under oath.

Who can become an expert? If a person has thorough knowledge, skill, education, and experience or training in a branch of learning, then that person's expert services may be used by law firms, insurance providers or other businesses that need expert advice in an area where they do not have expertise. The experts may be used to save money or counter suspect claims.

In some fields the definition of an expert is well established by agreement and it

is not necessary for an individual to have an academic qualification to be accepted as an expert. For example, a farmer with a lifetime of experience growing, say, bananas could be recognised as having complete expertise in the growing and harvesting of bananas. Such experts have extended experience through practice and self-education in a particular field.

An expert differs from a specialist in that a specialist has to find a solution to a problem while an expert has to know the solution. The opposite of a specialist would be a generalist—somebody with some expertise in many fields. The opposite of an expert is generally known as a layperson—someone who is not trained or has no specific knowledge or skills. A person may well be an expert in one field and a layperson in other fields.

A person who has a practical understanding is generally known as a technician, or even as a serviceperson.

Sources: <<http://www.expertwitnesses.com.au/faq.asp>> and <<http://reyadel.wordpress.com/2009/03/17/more-and-more-about-less-and-less/>>