THE 5 ELEMENTS OF SELF-DEFENSE LAW

Every claim of self-defense is based on (up to) 5 legal elements. If a prosecutor disproves any one required element, your entire self-defense justification collapses.

Innocence

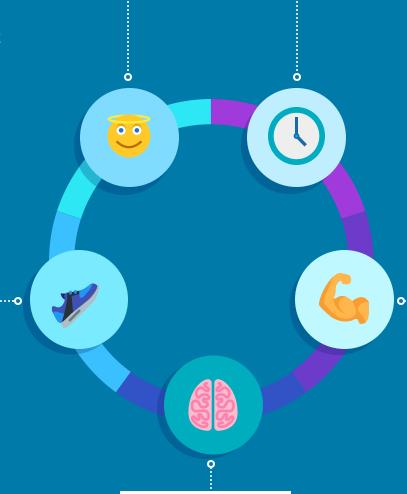
Don't start the fight

A person who is the initial physical aggressor in a confrontation is not the innocent party and cannot justify their use of force as self-defense.

Avoidance

Run if you can

Some states impose a legal duty to retreat, when safely possible, before you may use deadly force in self-defense. In all states retreat is the smart choice if safely possible.



Good decisions, under the circumstances

Reasonableness

You don't have to make perfect decisions in selfdefense, but you do have to make reasonable decisions. Mistakes, if any, must be reasonable mistakes. Attack in progress

Imminence

The threat being defended against must be actually occurring or immediately about to occur. An already completed threat or a speculative future threat does not justify the defensive use of force.

• Proportionality

Right tool, right job

Deadly defensive force may be used only to counter a deadly force threat. If the threat is nondeadly, only non-deadly defensive force may be used.

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