**Case Study: O.J. Simpson**

**Summary**

O.J. Simpson trial, criminal [trial](https://www.britannica.com/topic/trial-law) of former college and professional [gridiron football](https://www.britannica.com/sports/gridiron-football) star [O.J. Simpson](https://www.britannica.com/biography/O-J-Simpson), who was acquitted in 1995 of the [murder](https://www.britannica.com/topic/murder-crime) of his ex-wife [Nicole Brown Simpson](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nicole-Brown-Simpson) and her friend [Ronald Goldman](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ronald-Goldman). It was one of the most [notorious](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/notorious) criminal trials in American history.

On the night of June 12, 1994, Simpson’s ex-wife and Goldman were stabbed to death outside her condominium in [Los Angeles](https://www.britannica.com/place/Los-Angeles-California), and Simpson quickly became the prime suspect. Rather than surrender to [police](https://www.britannica.com/topic/police) after being notified of impending charges, on June 17 Simpson hid in the back of a sport-utility vehicle driven by his friend A.C. Cowlings. After being told that Simpson had a [gun](https://www.britannica.com/technology/gun-weapon) to his own head, law-enforcement officers followed the vehicle at low speeds for more than an hour. The attempted “escape” was televised live nationally—seen by an estimated 95 million viewers—and hundreds of Simpson’s fans lined the streets in support of him. It ended at Simpson’s home in Brentwood, [California](https://www.britannica.com/place/California-state), where he was placed under arrest and taken into police custody.

Simpson was formally arraigned on July 22, 1994, entering a plea of not guilty. The trial began on January 24, 1995, with Lance Ito as the presiding judge. The Los Angeles district attorney’s office, led by Marcia Clark and Christopher Darden, emphasized the [domestic violence](https://www.britannica.com/topic/domestic-violence) that had occurred prior to and after the Simpsons’ 1992 divorce as a motive for the murders. The attorneys representing Simpson, known as the “Dream Team,” included [F. Lee Bailey](https://www.britannica.com/biography/F-Lee-Bailey), Robert Blasier, Shawn Chapman Holley, [Robert Shapiro](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Robert-Shapiro), and [Alan Dershowitz](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alan-Dershowitz); Johnnie Cochran later became the defense team’s lead attorney. The Simpson defense was based largely on the grounds that evidence had been mishandled and that many members of the [Los Angeles police department](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Los-Angeles-Police-Department) were racist, particularly Mark Fuhrman, a detective who allegedly found a bloody leather glove at Simpson’s home. The defense team argued that the glove could not have been Simpson’s, because it appeared too small for his hand when he tried it on in the courtroom. In addition to the glove, the defense claimed that other important evidence had been planted by the police to frame Simpson. During the trial, which lasted more than eight months, some 150 witnesses testified, though Simpson did not take the stand.

Many [cable television](https://www.britannica.com/technology/cable-television) networks devoted long stretches of time to speculation about the case and to [public opinion](https://www.britannica.com/topic/public-opinion) of it. Belief in Simpson’s innocence or guilt was divided largely along racial lines, with a majority of [African Americans](https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-American) in support of Simpson and most white Americans believing in his guilt. Millions watched the television proceedings of the trial throughout the day, and the major figures involved in the case became instant celebrities.

**Result**

On October 2, 1995, the jury finally began deliberating and reached a verdict in less than four hours. On October 3 Simpson was found not guilty of the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman