

# HOW TO DETERMINE THE VALUE OF YOUR PERSONAL INJURY CASE

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WHAT IS YOUR CAR ACCIDENT CASE REALLY WORTH?

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# HOW TO DETERMINE THE VALUE OF A PERSONAL INJURY CASE

## WHAT IS YOUR CAR ACCIDENT CASE REALLY WORTH?

There is no magic formula or process by which someone can predict with certainty the amount of money that a personal injury case may be worth. If there were, then society wouldn't have a need for personal injury lawyers. One could simply apply the "formula" to come up with the value of a case. And if this happened there would be no need for a trial. Yet we know that trials are necessary when the two sides cannot agree on the value of a case.

Generally speaking, a case is worth the amount of damages inflicted on the person who has been injured. These damages may be easy to calculate, like past and future medical charges, lost earnings, lost earning capacity, and property loss. But the law also states that the injured person has the right to recover compensation for other "intangible" harms. It is these "intangible" harms that are more difficult to calculate, and they usually include pain, agony, disability, loss of enjoyment, inconvenience, and mental anguish. The intangible harms are purely

subjective, difficult to determine and often vary among the people (or jurors) who are deciding the case. Ultimately, the value of a case is determined by the jury (or judge if the case is tried to the court). After a case arises, the injured person's attorney and the at-fault person's insurance company (and the defense attorney if the case is in litigation) are continually trying to evaluate how a jury might see the case and how much money a jury might award. Then each side will assign a value or a value range, and try to negotiate a settlement close or above each side's own range.

Often times it may take many months or years before the value of a case can be adequately assessed. One reason for this is because of the slow progress of the person's recovery or rehabilitation. Another reason is due to the complexity of the injury or condition which may cause a significant delay in a firm diagnosis by the treating physician. In many instances a case should not be settled or resolved until the person obtains maximum improvement following

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the accident, and this can also contribute to the delay of achieving a reasonable resolution of the case.

In many instances the value of a case is driven primarily by the extent and severity of the person's injuries. Other important factors to consider include the type, extent and frequency of past medical treatment and the need for future treatment. When I evaluate a case, I also rely on several other factors to help me determine the case value. These factors may include, but are not limited to, the client's likeability as a witness and his or her credibility, the facts of the accident giving rise to the case, the extent and permanency of the injuries, the client's age, whether the client missed time from work, the identities of the at-fault insurance company and its defense attorney, specific legal or evidentiary issues involved in the case, the county or venue where the case has

been or will be filed, and the amount of settlements and verdicts for similar types of cases that I and other lawyers have handled in the past.

You should note that no two cases are alike, even if the accident and/or injuries involved are nearly identical. This means that the evaluation of two cases which appear to be similar on the surface may actually produce widely different evaluations due to the other factors listed above. Evaluating personal injury cases takes a lot of knowledge, experience and some hard-earned intuition. Without these traits you may be at a serious disadvantage when negotiating with the insurance adjustor. And unless you are in the business of evaluating and settling personal injury cases for a living, you should look to an experienced personal injury attorney for guidance.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ross Jurewitz is the principal attorney and manager of the San Diego litigation firm, the Jurewitz Law Group. Mr. Jurewitz's practice is dedicated solely to representing people injured in accidents.

Mr. Jurewitz was born in Pomona, California in 1974, and spent almost all of his early life living in the Los Angeles area in Claremont, California. He graduated from Claremont High School and moved to San Diego, California in 1993 to attend college at the University of California, San Diego. He received his B.A. degree in 1997 with a major in Political Science and a minor in Law and Society. Following college, Mr. Jurewitz attended the Washington College of Law at American University. Mr. Jurewitz is licensed to practice law before all courts in the State of California.

Mr. Jurewitz has been exclusively representing injured people for nearly 10 years. In 2002, he joined the prestigious San Diego personal injury law firm of Hoey and Morgan, representing injured people in litigation as trial counsel. In 2004, Mr. Jurewitz formed the partnership of Wick & Jurewitz where he blended the tools and

resources of a large law firm with the personal touch found in a small, personal law firm to provide injury accident clients with excellent service and results.

Continuing that same philosophy, Mr. Jurewitz formed the Jurewitz Law Group in 2007.

In his spare time, Mr. Jurewitz enjoys spending time with his wife, Lee, and their two dogs, Ace (an American Bulldog) and Blackjack (a German Shephard mix) in their coastal North San Diego County home. Mr. Jurewitz also enjoys playing golf, traveling, and spending the fall rooting for the University of Texas Longhorns football team.

