

# U.S. Slave Codes - Examples

1. No slave could testify in court, except in a case involving another slave.
2. It was illegal for a slave holder to work slaves in the field on Sundays, except as punishment *or* unless they were paid.
3. Any slave who went away from his/her plantation had to have a pass. The slave had to show this pass to any white who wanted to see it.
4. A slave was freed only by a will drawn up by the master or by buying their freedom from the master. (This was very expensive.)
5. Slaves could not make any kind of contract, including marriage.
6. Slaves were not allowed to have weapons.
7. It was illegal for more than a few slaves (5) to gather together away from home unless a white was present. No slave was allowed to preach, except to slaves on his/her own plantation while in the presence of whites.
8. Any slave caught stealing could be whipped.
9. It was illegal to teach slaves to read/write. It was illegal to give them books.
10. It was illegal to cruelly mistreat or kill a slave unless the slave resisted.
11. A child who had one slave parent and one free parent was free ONLY if the free parent was the child's mother.
12. Slaves could not own property and, in some states, could not own animals.
13. Owners were required to feed and clothe their slaves properly and take care of their sick and old slaves.
14. Any African Americans who cannot prove they are free are considered slaves.
15. Most cities had laws controlling slave behavior in public. For example, in Charleston, S.C., slaves were not allowed to sweat, smoke, or walk with a cane.

# Brazilian Slave Codes - Examples

1. A slave could not give sworn testimony in court *against* a white. A slave could give general information.
  2. Slaves were not given food rations by their owners, but were required to grow their own food. Most slaves spent Sundays doing this. Any extra crop could be sold.
  3. If no one could prove that an African was a slave, they were considered free.
  4. A slave could buy their freedom, if the master agreed to the price.
  5. Slave marriages were legal.
  6. Slaves could not carry guns.
  7. Dances and gatherings of slaves were forbidden.
  8. Any slave caught stealing gold/diamonds would be given 400 lashes in the public square.
  9. No law prevented slaves from learning to read or write.
  10. The punishment for a runaway slave:
    - a. 1<sup>st</sup> Try – Slave was branded
    - b. 2<sup>nd</sup> Try – Ear was cut off
    - c. 3<sup>rd</sup> Try – Slave was killed
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