

Legal Comm II

Ambrosi

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Learning Target: Students will understand the role of jury trials in criminal procedures.

Let's Get Started: On a piece of paper, briefly respond to this opening question.

- What is a jury and what do they do?

Jury Trials in Criminal Cases

The sixth amendment guarantees the right to a trial by jury in all criminal prosecutions. Let's explore the origins of the right to trial by jury, how juries function and current issues surrounding them. After learning more about juries, we will be able to describe the benefits and drawbacks of jury trials and determine if there should be additional legislation securing this right to a trial by jury in criminal prosecutions.

Vocabulary Activity

For each of the following words/phrases, record a definition and make an illustration.

- Beyond A Reasonable Doubt
- Independent Judiciary
- Individual Rights
- Judge
- Juror
- Jury Selection
- Mandatory Minimum Sentences
- Peers
- Petit Jury
- Plea Bargain
- Prejudice
- Prosecutor
- Recompense
- Tampering
- Voir Dire

History of Jury Trials

We will now watch this video about the history of jury trials. As you watch the video, please record answers to the following questions:

- Where did the idea of jury trials come from?
- Why were jury trials so important to the founders of the United States?
- According to Senator Whitehouse, what are advantage to using juries?
- How do jury trials limit the power of the government and protect individual rights?

Here is the link to the video: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4754200/history-jury-trials-united-states&cliptool#>

How Juries Work

Next, we will watch this quick video explanation of how juries work. As you watch the video, please answer these two questions:

- Who makes up a jury?
- What are juries expected to do?

Here is the link to the video:

<https://www.c-span.org/video/standalone/?c4754194&noMax&nobookmark#>

Jury Selection

We will now explore the jury selection process. As we view the video, please watch for answers to the following questions:

- What is meant by a "fair and impartial jury?"
- What is the voir dire process? How does this ensure a fair and impartial jury?

Here is the link to the video:

<https://www.c-span.org/video/standalone/?c4754193&noMax&nobookmark#>

Activity - Describe the Job of a Juror

Review your notes over the introductory videos; think about the history of jury trials and how they work.

ACTIVITY: Your neighbor, Watson, receives a jury summons in the mail. Watson is very nervous. He has never been to court! In fact, Watson lived abroad for most of his life and he is pretty unfamiliar with the US criminal justice system. Won't you be a good neighbor? Write Watson an encouraging letter! Be sure to explain the role of a juror and why it is important.

Additional Resources

How Courts Work

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/resources/law_related_education_network/how_courts_work/jury_role/

A Juror's Rights and Responsibilities

https://www.ksbar.org/page/juror_rights

Reasonable Doubts about the Jury System

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/how-bias-shapes-juries/395957/>