

# ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



**Episode #612**  
**Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?**  
**22nd May, 2026**

Transcript	3
Key vocabulary	24
Language spotlight	32
Quiz	35
Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions	35
True or False	37
Fill in the Blanks	37
Vocabulary Practice	38
Answers	41

## **Transcript**

[00:00:05] Hello, hello, hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English, the show where you can listen to fascinating stories and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to be talking about the law, specifically, [jury trials](#)<sup>1</sup> in Britain, and their future.

[00:00:32] The role of [jury trials](#) is a subject of [ongoing](#)<sup>2</sup> debate, and the law might well be changing, so today we're going to look at the unusual idea and the [uneven](#)<sup>3</sup> history of the jury, and at how twelve strangers with no legal training can decide whether someone is guilty or not guilty.

[00:00:55] OK then, let's not waste a minute and get right into it.

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<sup>1</sup> court cases decided by a group of ordinary people

<sup>2</sup> continuing; still happening

<sup>3</sup> not equal; not the same everywhere

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:01:01] Imagine you are charged with a crime in England today. Not a minor traffic [offence](#)<sup>4</sup>. Something serious. [Fraud](#)<sup>5</sup>, perhaps, or [assault](#)<sup>6</sup>. You [maintain](#)<sup>7</sup> that you are innocent. You are certain you can prove it.

[00:01:18] And of course, you are innocent. You listen to this show, which means you are an [upstanding](#)<sup>8</sup>, [law-abiding](#)<sup>9</sup> member of society. But somehow, somewhere, you've been [accused](#)<sup>10</sup> and [charged](#)<sup>11</sup> with a crime.

[00:01:34] Your lawyer tells you to expect your case to come to court in approximately three years. Possibly four. Some cases, he tells you, are now being scheduled to start in 2029.

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<sup>4</sup> a crime; something illegal

<sup>5</sup> crime of lying or cheating for money

<sup>6</sup> physically attacking someone

<sup>7</sup> say it is true, insist

<sup>8</sup> honest and respectable

<sup>9</sup> following the law

<sup>10</sup> said to have done a crime

<sup>11</sup> officially told by police you/they committed a crime

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:01:51] Until then, you'll just need to **sit tight**<sup>12</sup>. The possible **verdict**<sup>13</sup> will be hanging over you. It will be the first thing you think about when you wake up, and the last thought you have before you go to sleep every night.

[00:02:06] This is the reality of the Crown Court system in England and Wales in 2026. There are more than 78,000 cases waiting to be heard. The **backlog**<sup>14</sup> — the number of cases sitting in this queue — has roughly doubled since before the pandemic. And it is still growing.

[00:02:31] And let's say you are the victim of a crime. It's the same wait, just from the other side. You might have to wait two, three, even four years until you can have some kind of **closure**<sup>15</sup>. And all that time, the person accused may still be walking free.

[00:02:53] Some victims, perfectly understandably, wait so long for their day in court that they simply give up and **drop**<sup>16</sup> the charges.

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<sup>12</sup> wait patiently without doing anything

<sup>13</sup> the final decision in the trial

<sup>14</sup> the number of cases sitting in this queue

<sup>15</sup> a feeling that it is finished emotionally

<sup>16</sup> stop or give up

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:03:03] The government's response, which was announced earlier this year by the Justice Secretary David Lammy, is [radical](#)<sup>17</sup>.

[00:03:12] The basic idea is to reduce the number of cases going to a [jury trial](#)<sup>18</sup>, and to reserve [jury trials](#) more clearly for the most serious offences.

[00:03:25] The Courts and Tribunals [Bill](#)<sup>19</sup>, which is [working its way](#)<sup>20</sup> through Parliament as this episode is being recorded, would remove the rights of defendants to elect a [jury trial](#) for what are called “either-way [offences](#)<sup>21</sup>” — things like [fraud](#), robbery, and certain drug offences.

[00:03:46] These are offences that are serious enough to go to the Crown Court but not the most serious crimes. At the moment, a defendant [charged](#) with an either-way offence can choose whether to be tried by [magistrates](#)<sup>22</sup> — who sit without a [jury](#) — or by a [jury](#)<sup>23</sup> in the Crown Court.

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<sup>17</sup> very new and different

<sup>18</sup> a court case decided by a group of ordinary people

<sup>19</sup> a proposed new law

<sup>20</sup> slowly moving through a process

<sup>21</sup> crimes

<sup>22</sup> judges in lower courts

<sup>23</sup> a group of citizens who decide a case

## English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #612

### Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:04:09] That choice, the government says, must go.

[00:04:13] And it's worth being clear about what this proposal does not include. Murder. Rape. Terrorism. Grievous bodily harm. Nobody in government is suggesting that the most serious crimes should be [tried](#)<sup>24</sup> without a jury. The proposal is specifically about this middle tier of offences, for now at least. Now, the legal community in Britain is, to put it [mildly](#)<sup>25</sup>, alarmed.

[00:04:43] Lawyers, [barristers](#)<sup>26</sup>, and legal academics have all come out strongly against the [bill](#), with many arguing that the right to a [jury trial](#) is a [fundamental](#)<sup>27</sup> [safeguard](#)<sup>28</sup> against the [overreach](#)<sup>29</sup> of the state. It exists for a reason, they say, and is one of the foundations of a just and fair society.

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<sup>24</sup> judged in court

<sup>25</sup> gently

<sup>26</sup> lawyers who speak in court

<sup>27</sup> very important and basic

<sup>28</sup> something that protects people

<sup>29</sup> using too much power

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:05:08] So, is it really? Where does the idea of [jury service](#)<sup>30</sup> come from? How is it used, and what are some of the most famous cases of [juries](#)<sup>31</sup> in action?

[00:05:20] Well, let's start with what a [jury trial](#) actually is, because it might be quite an unfamiliar concept, especially if you come from a country with a civil-law system.

[00:05:35] In England, when you are [charged](#) with a serious criminal offence, your guilt or innocence is decided not by a judge, but by a [jury](#).

[00:05:48] A [jury](#) is a group of twelve ordinary citizens, chosen at random, who are called to sit in court and listen to the evidence presented by both sides.

[00:06:02] At the end of the trial, they [retire](#)<sup>32</sup> — they leave the courtroom and [deliberate](#)<sup>33</sup> together in private — and they return with a [verdict](#). Guilty, or not guilty.

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<sup>30</sup> duty to be a juror

<sup>31</sup> groups of jurors

<sup>32</sup> leave the courtroom to decide

<sup>33</sup> think and discuss carefully

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:06:17] The judge's job is to **oversee**<sup>34</sup> the **proceedings**<sup>35</sup>, to advise the **jury** on points of law, and if the **verdict** comes back guilty, they will decide on the appropriate punishment, based on the **severity**<sup>36</sup> of the crime.

[00:06:34] But the central factual question — did this person **commit**<sup>37</sup> this crime? — this is answered by the twelve random strangers pulled in off the street. Or rather, not literally pulled in off the street, but chosen at random from the electoral roll.

[00:06:55] This is what lawyers call the **adversarial**<sup>38</sup> system.

[00:06:59] Two sides — the prosecution and the defence — present their cases to a neutral decision-maker.

[00:07:07] It's quite different from the more **inquisitorial**<sup>39</sup> system used in France, Germany, and most of continental Europe, where the judge takes a far more active role in investigating the facts, and where ordinary citizens play a much smaller part.

[00:07:26] And this jury system, and the principle behind it, goes back a very long way.

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<sup>34</sup> watch and manage

<sup>35</sup> the events in a court case

<sup>36</sup> how serious it is

<sup>37</sup> do (a crime)

<sup>38</sup> a system where two sides argue

<sup>39</sup> a system where the judge investigates

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:07:34] The first jury-like systems we know of appeared in ancient Athens, around the sixth century BC. Athenian citizens could be called to serve as dikastai — citizen judges — who would hear arguments and decide cases by majority vote.

[00:07:54] Sometimes there were hundreds of them sitting on a single [trial](#)<sup>40</sup>. The most famous example is the [trial](#) of Socrates in 399 BC, in which five hundred citizens voted to [condemn](#)<sup>41</sup> him to death. It was, in some ways, the first great [jury trial](#). And it produced one of history's most [controversial](#)<sup>42</sup> [verdicts](#)<sup>43</sup>.

[00:08:19] The English jury, however, developed much later.

[00:08:24] In [etymological](#)<sup>44</sup> terms, as the keen linguists among you might have guessed, the English word "jury" comes from the Old French "juré," meaning "sworn" — those who have taken an [oath](#)<sup>45</sup>, who have made a promise.

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<sup>40</sup> a formal court case

<sup>41</sup> say he was guilty and punish him

<sup>42</sup> causing strong disagreement

<sup>43</sup> decisions in trials

<sup>44</sup> related to word origins

<sup>45</sup> a serious promise

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:08:43] What the English did was **formalise**<sup>46</sup> it. In 1166, King Henry II issued what is called the Assize of Clarendon. It required that in each district, twelve local men **of good standing**<sup>47</sup> should be **assembled**<sup>48</sup> to report on crimes and **settle**<sup>49</sup> **disputes**<sup>50</sup>.

[00:09:04] This was not yet the modern **jury** as we know it today, but it established the principle: twelve local people, deciding together.

[00:09:15] Then, in 1215, came Magna Carta — the great document forced on King John by his barons. It contains a **clause**<sup>51</sup> that has shaped the law ever since: "No free man shall be **seized**<sup>52</sup>, imprisoned, or **dispossessed**<sup>53</sup>, except by the lawful judgement of his equals."

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<sup>46</sup> make it official

<sup>47</sup> respected and trusted

<sup>48</sup> brought together

<sup>49</sup> solve

<sup>50</sup> arguments or disagreements

<sup>51</sup> a part of a legal document

<sup>52</sup> taken by force

<sup>53</sup> having property taken away

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:09:40] The important idea there is not the exact modern [mechanism](#)<sup>54</sup>, but the principle behind it: that justice should not simply be the [arbitrary](#)<sup>55</sup> [will](#)<sup>56</sup> of the ruler. The lawful judgement of "his equals" — people like him. [Peers](#)<sup>57</sup> judging [peers](#).

[00:10:00] So when the British government talks about removing [jury trials](#) for a large category of offences, it's not proposing a minor administrative [tweak](#)<sup>58</sup>. It's proposing to [dismantle](#)<sup>59</sup> a mechanism of justice that has existed, in some form, for over eight hundred years.

[00:10:21] Now, if you live in a country where the legal system doesn't use juries, you might be thinking: why would you need them?

[00:10:31] It's a perfectly reasonable question to ask: why use ordinary people at all?

[00:10:37] Why not have a judge decide every case? After all, they are a professional, trained in the law, experienced in weighing evidence.

[00:10:47] The answer is about power.

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<sup>54</sup> system or method

<sup>55</sup> based on personal choice, not rules

<sup>56</sup> what they want or decide

<sup>57</sup> people of the same status

<sup>58</sup> small change

<sup>59</sup> take apart or remove

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:10:50] A judge is **appointed**<sup>60</sup> by the state. They work within the system. They have a career to protect and professional **instincts**<sup>61</sup> shaped by years inside the legal establishment.

[00:11:04] A jury is none of those things. It is twelve people chosen at random, with no career to protect, no **deference**<sup>62</sup> to authority, and no **obligation**<sup>63</sup> to the government.

[00:11:18] That randomness is the point. You cannot **bribe**<sup>64</sup>, **pressurise**<sup>65</sup> or **intimidate**<sup>66</sup> twelve strangers before they walk into the room, because you do not know who they are.

[00:11:30] A single judge, however, is a **known quantity**<sup>67</sup>. If a government wants to **convict**<sup>68</sup> someone, a judge is a far easier target than a jury.

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<sup>60</sup> officially chosen

<sup>61</sup> natural feelings or reactions

<sup>62</sup> respect and acceptance of authority

<sup>63</sup> something they must do for

<sup>64</sup> give money to influence someone

<sup>65</sup> force someone to do something

<sup>66</sup> frighten someone to control them

<sup>67</sup> someone people already know about

<sup>68</sup> officially say they are guilty

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:11:44] There is also something important about legitimacy.

[00:11:48] When a jury **convicts**<sup>69</sup> someone, the wider community can see that the verdict came from ordinary people — people like them. It was not **handed down**<sup>70</sup> by a distant official.

[00:12:03] Yes, it can be slow and frustrating, but for the most part, it works. Twelve people need to be sufficiently **convinced**<sup>71</sup>, based on the evidence they have seen, that someone is either guilty or not guilty.

[00:12:21] Sometimes, however, a jury does something unexpected. It acquits someone who is, by any technical reading of the law, guilty.

[00:12:32] Lawyers call this **jury nullification**<sup>72</sup>.

[00:12:37] It is the power of a **jury** to refuse to convict even when the facts seem clear, because the **jurors**<sup>73</sup> believe that convicting would produce an **unjust**<sup>74</sup> result.

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<sup>69</sup> finds them guilty

<sup>70</sup> officially given

<sup>71</sup> made sure something is true

<sup>72</sup> when a jury ignores the law to give a not guilty decision

<sup>73</sup> members of a jury

<sup>74</sup> unfair

## English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #612

### Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:12:51] The law says he did it; we say it doesn't matter. We'll come to a few examples of this in a minute.

[00:12:59] Now, the most famous [jury trial](#) in living memory is probably the OJ Simpson case, in 1995.

[00:13:09] You might know this story already, and if you're a member, you might remember it from episode number 409.

[00:13:18] But as a quick reminder, the former American football star was [acquitted](#)<sup>75</sup> of murdering his ex-wife, who was found not guilty, despite [overwhelming](#)<sup>76</sup> physical evidence against him.

[00:13:32] Now, rather than [revisit](#)<sup>77</sup> that case, let me tell you about a few lesser-known cases — because they show something more specific about how the system actually works.

[00:13:46] The first dates from 1670, when the principle of [jury nullification](#) was established in England. This is the case of William Penn, the man who would later found the [colony](#)<sup>78</sup> of Pennsylvania in America.

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<sup>75</sup> officially found not guilty

<sup>76</sup> very strong; very large amount of

<sup>77</sup> look at again

<sup>78</sup> a place settled by people from another country

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:14:03] Now, Penn was a Quaker [preacher](#)<sup>79</sup>. He was accused of holding what was called an unlawful religious [assembly](#)<sup>80</sup> — in other words, [preaching](#)<sup>81</sup> publicly in a way that the authorities said was illegal.

[00:14:19] Penn was clearly guilty under the law.

[00:14:24] But the [jury](#) refused to convict him. The judge was [furious](#)<sup>82</sup>.

[00:14:30] He locked the [jurors](#) up without food or drink to force a guilty [verdict](#).

[00:14:36] They still refused. A higher court eventually ruled that a jury could not be punished for its [verdict](#), whatever that [verdict](#) might be.

[00:14:46] And that principle has remained ever since.

[00:14:51] Now, fast-forward three centuries. It is February 1985, and a man named Clive Ponting is sitting in the dock at the Old Bailey — London's most famous criminal court.

[00:15:07] Ponting is a senior civil servant at the Ministry of Defence.

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<sup>79</sup> a person who spoke about religion

<sup>80</sup> a meeting of people

<sup>81</sup> speaking publicly about religion

<sup>82</sup> very angry

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:15:13] He has [leaked](#)<sup>83</sup> [classified](#)<sup>84</sup> documents to a Labour Member of Parliament — documents that revealed the Argentine Navy ship General Belgrano had been sailing away from the British [exclusion zone](#)<sup>85</sup> when it was [sunk](#)<sup>86</sup> during the Falklands War, killing 323 Argentine sailors.

[00:15:36] Importantly, the Conservative government had told Parliament something quite different.

[00:15:44] Ponting is charged under the Official Secrets Act. He is, [on the face of it](#)<sup>87</sup>, obviously guilty. He admits [leaking](#)<sup>88</sup> the documents. The judge, [summing up](#)<sup>89</sup>, tells the jury that "the interests of the state" are the same as the interests of the government, and directs them [accordingly](#)<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> secretly shared information

<sup>84</sup> officially secret

<sup>85</sup> an area where entry was not allowed

<sup>86</sup> sent to the bottom of the sea

<sup>87</sup> as it seems at first

<sup>88</sup> secretly sharing

<sup>89</sup> giving a final explanation

<sup>90</sup> in a way that fits the situation

## English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #612

### Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:16:08] The **jury retires**<sup>91</sup>. It comes back with a **verdict** of not guilty.

[00:16:16] The government is **furious**.

[00:16:19] But the **jury** had evidently decided that telling Parliament the truth about the deaths of 323 people was not a crime worth punishing.

[00:16:32] And this **theme**<sup>92</sup> has continued to the modern day. In January 2022, four **defendants**<sup>93</sup> appear before a jury at Bristol Crown Court, charged with criminal damage. They had pulled down the statue of Edward Colston, an eighteenth-century slave trader, during the Black Lives Matter protests of June 2020, and they had thrown the statue into Bristol harbour. They do not **deny**<sup>94</sup> doing it. The **footage**<sup>95</sup> exists.

[00:17:07] The **jury** finds them not guilty, by eleven votes to one.

[00:17:14] The then Justice Secretary was **furious**. And so were many members of the public.

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<sup>91</sup> leaves to decide privately

<sup>92</sup> main idea

<sup>93</sup> people accused in court

<sup>94</sup> say it is not true

<sup>95</sup> video recording

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:17:21] Others pointed out that the jury had done exactly what [juries](#) are meant to do: reach a [verdict](#) the [jurors](#) considered [just](#)<sup>96</sup>, based on the full [circumstances](#)<sup>97</sup> of the case.

[00:17:35] Critics, however, argued that this looked uncomfortably close to [jurors](#) [overriding](#)<sup>98</sup> the law because they [sympathised](#)<sup>99</sup> with the [defendants](#).

[00:17:47] This [sparked](#)<sup>100</sup> a fierce debate over the role of [juries](#): should [juries](#) be allowed, in effect, to rewrite the law through their [verdicts](#), or is that [unpredictability](#)<sup>101</sup> precisely part of their constitutional function?

[00:18:04] Now, you may have strong views on this, but what is clear is that these cases make an argument for [juries](#) that no efficiency review ever will. The government couldn't predict how any of those [juries](#) would vote. That uncertainty — that independence from the state — that is exactly what the bill would start to [erode](#)<sup>102</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> fair and right

<sup>97</sup> the situation around it

<sup>98</sup> setting aside, ignoring

<sup>99</sup> felt understanding or support for

<sup>100</sup> caused it to start

<sup>101</sup> the state of being difficult to foretell or predict

<sup>102</sup> slowly reduce or weaken

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:18:30] No longer would twelve strangers be responsible for deciding whether someone is guilty. That responsibility would instead fall to magistrates or a judge.

[00:18:43] Now, the government is not necessarily saying that this is a better system in terms of fairness; its argument is primarily practical. The [backlog](#) is over 78,000 cases and growing, with official modelling suggesting it could rise to 200,000 by 2035.

[00:19:06] [Victims](#)<sup>103</sup> are waiting years. Fewer [jury trials](#), so the argument goes, will be faster and cheaper, and will allow the most serious cases to receive [jury trials](#) without the same years-long wait.

[00:19:23] But the [counterargument](#)<sup>104</sup> is powerful.

[00:19:27] The value of the jury lies precisely in its [awkwardness](#)<sup>105</sup> — the fact that it's slow, unpredictable, and [answerable](#)<sup>106</sup> to no one. A state that can imprison its citizens without needing to [persuade](#)<sup>107</sup> ordinary members of the public is a state with considerably more [concentrated](#)<sup>108</sup> power.

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<sup>103</sup> people harmed by a crime

<sup>104</sup> the opposite argument

<sup>105</sup> difficulty or discomfort

<sup>106</sup> responsible to

<sup>107</sup> make them agree

<sup>108</sup> gathered in one place

## English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #612

### Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:19:50] And then there is the [slippery slope](#)<sup>109</sup> argument.

[00:19:54] The current proposal is careful to exclude the most serious crimes. But the critics' concern is not really about where the [line is drawn](#)<sup>110</sup> today. It's about what happens once you accept that the line can be moved at all.

[00:20:12] Once you establish that [efficiency](#)<sup>111</sup> can [override](#)<sup>112</sup> eight hundred years of constitutional principle, the question is: how far?

[00:20:22] A government that reduces jury rights for fraud and robbery has already won the argument in principle. What stops a future government from extending that [logic](#)<sup>113</sup> to other offences, if a new [backlog](#) develops, or a new pressure emerges?

[00:20:39] A poll in 2025 found that fifty-four per cent of people in Britain would prefer to be [tried](#) by a [jury](#) if accused of a crime. Even knowing all the delays and imperfections, a majority of the population trusts twelve strangers more than it trusts a single judge.

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<sup>109</sup> a situation that can easily get worse

<sup>110</sup> where a limit is set

<sup>111</sup> doing things quickly and well

<sup>112</sup> ignore or replace

<sup>113</sup> reasoning

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

[00:21:02] And that, perhaps, is the most important thing to understand about [jury service](#). It is not simply a mechanism for producing verdicts. It is an expression of a belief — the belief that ordinary citizens, and not the state, should [have the final say](#)<sup>114</sup> over whether one of their number is imprisoned.

[00:21:25] Britain is debating whether to give that up, and, in so doing, is asking whether eight centuries of constitutional principle are really worth [sacrificing](#)<sup>115</sup> [for the sake of](#)<sup>116</sup> clearing an administrative [backlog](#).

[00:21:42] OK then, that is it for today's episode on [jury trials](#).

[00:21:46] I hope it's been an interesting one and that you've learnt something new.

[00:21:50] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:21:53] Do [juries](#) exist in your country? If so, how do they work? And are there similar proposals to change them?

[00:22:02] Let me know in the comments below, if you're listening to this somewhere where you can comment, and for the members among you, you can head right into our community forum, which is at [community.leonardoenglish.com](http://community.leonardoenglish.com) and get chatting away to other curious minds.

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<sup>114</sup> make the last decision

<sup>115</sup> giving up

<sup>116</sup> in order to help

**English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #612**  
**Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?**

[00:22:16] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds by Leonardo English.

[00:22:21] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

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## **Key vocabulary**

<b>Word</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Jury trials</b>	court cases decided by a group of ordinary people
<b>Ongoing</b>	continuing; still happening
<b>Uneven</b>	not equal; not the same everywhere
<b>Offence</b>	a crime; something illegal
<b>Fraud</b>	crime of lying or cheating for money
<b>Assault</b>	physically attacking someone
<b>Maintain</b>	say it is true, insist
<b>Upstanding</b>	honest and respectable
<b>Law-abiding</b>	following the law
<b>Accused</b>	said to have done a crime
<b>Charged</b>	officially told by police you/they committed a crime
<b>Sit tight</b>	wait patiently without doing anything
<b>Verdict</b>	the final decision in the trial

Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

<b>Backlog</b>	the number of cases sitting in this queue
<b>Closure</b>	a feeling that it is finished emotionally
<b>Drop</b>	stop or give up
<b>Radical</b>	very new and different
<b>Jury trial</b>	a court case decided by a group of ordinary people
<b>Bill</b>	a proposed new law
<b>Working its way</b>	slowly moving through a process
<b>Offences</b>	crimes
<b>Magistrates</b>	judges in lower courts
<b>Jury</b>	a group of citizens who decide a case
<b>Tried</b>	judged in court
<b>Mildly</b>	gently
<b>Barristers</b>	lawyers who speak in court
<b>Fundamental</b>	very important and basic
<b>Safeguard</b>	something that protects people

Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

<b>Overreach</b>	using too much power
<b>Jury service</b>	duty to be a juror
<b>Juries</b>	groups of jurors
<b>Retire</b>	leave the courtroom to decide
<b>Deliberate</b>	think and discuss carefully
<b>Oversee</b>	watch and manage
<b>Proceedings</b>	the events in a court case
<b>Severity</b>	how serious it is
<b>Commit</b>	do (a crime)
<b>Adversarial</b>	a system where two sides argue
<b>Inquisitorial</b>	a system where the judge investigates
<b>Trial</b>	a formal court case
<b>Condemn</b>	say he was guilty and punish him
<b>Controversial</b>	causing strong disagreement
<b>Verdicts</b>	decisions in trials

Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

<b>Etymological</b>	related to word origins
<b>Oath</b>	a serious promise
<b>Formalise</b>	make it official
<b>Of good standing</b>	respected and trusted
<b>Assembled</b>	brought together
<b>Settle</b>	solve
<b>Disputes</b>	arguments or disagreements
<b>Clause</b>	a part of a legal document
<b>Seized</b>	taken by force
<b>Dispossessed</b>	having property taken away
<b>Mechanism</b>	system or method
<b>Arbitrary</b>	based on personal choice, not rules
<b>Will</b>	what they want or decide
<b>Peers</b>	people of the same status
<b>Tweak</b>	small change

Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

<b>Dismantle</b>	take apart or remove
<b>Appointed</b>	officially chosen
<b>Instincts</b>	natural feelings or reactions
<b>Deference</b>	respect and acceptance of authority
<b>Obligation</b>	something they must do for
<b>Bribe</b>	give money to influence someone
<b>Pressurise</b>	force someone to do something
<b>Intimidate</b>	frighten someone to control them
<b>Known quantity</b>	someone people already know about
<b>Convict</b>	officially say they are guilty
<b>Convicts</b>	finds them guilty
<b>Handed down</b>	officially given
<b>Convinced</b>	made sure something is true
<b>Jury nullification</b>	when a jury ignores the law to give a not guilty decision
<b>Jurors</b>	members of a jury

Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

<b>Unjust</b>	unfair
<b>Acquitted</b>	officially found not guilty
<b>Overwhelming</b>	very strong; very large amount of
<b>Revisit</b>	look at again
<b>Colony</b>	a place settled by people from another country
<b>Preacher</b>	a person who spoke about religion
<b>Assembly</b>	a meeting of people
<b>Preaching</b>	speaking publicly about religion
<b>Furious</b>	very angry
<b>Leaked</b>	secretly shared information
<b>Classified</b>	officially secret
<b>Exclusion zone</b>	an area where entry was not allowed
<b>Sunk</b>	sent to the bottom of the sea
<b>On the face of it</b>	as it seems at first
<b>Leaking</b>	secretly sharing

**Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?**

<b>Summing up</b>	giving a final explanation
<b>Accordingly</b>	in a way that fits the situation
<b>Retires</b>	leaves to decide privately
<b>Theme</b>	main idea
<b>Defendants</b>	people accused in court
<b>Deny</b>	say it is not true
<b>Footage</b>	video recording
<b>Just</b>	fair and right
<b>Circumstances</b>	the situation around it
<b>Overriding</b>	setting aside, ignoring
<b>Sympathised</b>	felt understanding or support for
<b>Sparked</b>	caused it to start
<b>Unpredictability</b>	the state of being difficult to foretell or predict
<b>Erode</b>	slowly reduce or weaken
<b>Victims</b>	people harmed by a crime

Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

<b>Counterargument</b>	the opposite argument
<b>Awkwardness</b>	difficulty or discomfort
<b>Answerable</b>	responsible to
<b>Persuade</b>	make them agree
<b>Concentrated</b>	gathered in one place
<b>Slippery slope</b>	a situation that can easily get worse
<b>Line is drawn</b>	where a limit is set
<b>Efficiency</b>	doing things quickly and well
<b>Override</b>	ignore or replace
<b>Logic</b>	reasoning
<b>Have the final say</b>	make the last decision
<b>Sacrificing</b>	giving up
<b>For the sake of</b>	in order to help

## **Language spotlight**

### **1. Sit tight**

- **Meaning:** Wait patiently without taking action.
- **Synonyms:** wait, stay put, hold on
- **Antonyms:** act, move, hurry
- **Examples:**
  - Just **sit tight** while I check the information for you.
  - We told the students to **sit tight** until the teacher arrived.

### **2. Working its way (through)**

- **Meaning:** Moving slowly through a process or system.
- **Synonyms:** progressing, moving forward, going through
- **Antonyms:** stopping, failing, being blocked
- **Examples:**
  - The new law is **working its way through** Parliament.

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

- Her application is **working its way through** the system.

### 3. On the face of it

- **Meaning:** Based only on what you see at first; at first impression.
- **Synonyms:** apparently, at first glance, seemingly
- **Antonyms:** in reality, actually, after closer look
- **Examples:**
  - **On the face of it**, the plan looks simple, but it's quite complex.
  - **On the face of it**, he seems guilty, but there is no proof.

### 4. Hand down (a verdict / decision)

- **Meaning:** To officially give a decision, especially in court.
- **Synonyms:** announce, deliver, declare
- **Antonyms:** withhold, delay, cancel
- **Examples:**
  - The judge will **hand down** the verdict tomorrow.

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

- The court **handed down** a long prison sentence.

### 5. For the sake of

- **Meaning:** In order to help or achieve something; because of something.
- **Synonyms:** for, in the interest of, for the benefit of
- **Antonyms:** against, despite
- **Examples:**
  - They changed the rules **for the sake of** fairness.
  - He stayed calm **for the sake of** his children.

## **Quiz**

### **Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions**

1. What is the main problem facing the Crown Court system?

- a) Not enough lawyers
- b) Too many judges
- c) A large number of delayed cases
- d) Too many jury members

2. Where do jurors come from?

- a) The police force
- b) The electoral roll
- c) Law schools
- d) Government offices

3. What is the government proposing to reduce?

- a) The number of crimes

b) The number of lawyers

c) The number of courts

d) The number of jury trials

4. What is an “either-way offence”?

a) A crime that can be tried in different courts

b) A crime that cannot go to court

c) A crime that is always serious

d) A crime with no punishment

5. What is the main role of a jury?

a) To decide the punishment

b) To choose the judge

c) To decide if someone is guilty or not

d) To write the law

## Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

### True or False

6. A majority of people in Britain prefer to be tried by a judge rather than a jury.

(True/False)

7. Victims sometimes stop their cases because of long delays. (True/False)

8. The new proposal includes removing jury trials for murder. (True/False)

9. Jurors are trained legal professionals. (True/False)

10. The jury system has existed for hundreds of years. (True/False)

### Fill in the Blanks

11. You listen to this show, which means you are an upstanding, law-\_\_\_\_\_ member of society.

12. It required that in each district, twelve local men of good \_\_\_\_\_ should be assembled to report on crimes and settle disputes.

13. A single judge, however, is a known \_\_\_\_\_. If a government wants to convict someone, a judge is a far easier target than a jury.

14. Sometimes, however, a jury does something unexpected. It acquits someone who is, by any technical reading of the law, guilty. Lawyers call this jury \_\_\_\_\_.

**Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?**

15. But the critics' concern is not really about where the line is \_\_\_\_\_ today. It's about what happens once you accept that the line can be moved at all.

**Vocabulary Practice**

16. What does “**backlog**” mean?

- a) A type of crime
- b) A large number of delayed cases
- c) A court decision
- d) A legal document

17. What does “**verdict**” mean?

- a) A type of lawyer
- b) The final decision in a trial
- c) A piece of evidence
- d) A punishment

Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?

18. What does “**acquitted**” mean?

- a) Found guilty
- b) Sent to prison
- c) Found not guilty
- d) Questioned by police

19. What does “**overreach**” mean?

- a) To use too much power
- b) To lose a case
- c) To follow the law
- d) To avoid a decision

20. What does “**safeguard**” mean?

- a) A punishment
- b) A type of judge
- c) Something that protects you

**English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #612**  
**Should Britain Abolish Jury Trials?**

d) A court building

## **Answers**

1. c) A large number of delayed cases
2. b) The electoral roll
3. d) The number of jury trials
4. a) A crime that can be tried in different courts
5. c) To decide if someone is guilty or not
6. False
7. True
8. False
9. False
10. True
11. abiding
12. standing
13. quantity
14. nullification
15. drawn
16. b) A large number of delayed cases
17. b) The final decision in a trial
18. c) Found not guilty
19. a) To use too much power
20. c) Something that protects you