

# The Right to Trial Through History

2925 B.C.E. - 30 B.C.E.

Ancient Egypt gives birth to the trial. While the pharaoh was the ultimate authority in the settlement of disputes, some duties were delegated to the vizier. In legal proceedings, plaintiffs were required to bring suit. The parties represented themselves and presented evidence. Witnesses were sometimes called, documents were examined, and the judgment included recommendations for preserving a written record of the trial.



1164 C.E.

The Constitutions of Clarendon in England mark the dawn of the jury, providing that "twelve lawful men of the neighbourhood or town" would sit in judgment of disputes and "make manifest the truth in this matter."

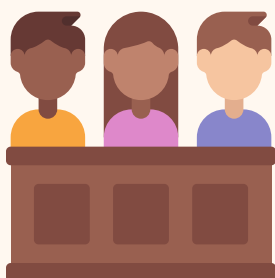
1215 C.E.

The Magna Carta, or "Great Charter," establishes that everyone is subject to the law, even the King of England. Clause 39 states, "No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land." The essential principle of "judgment of his equals" is embodied in the right to trial by jury today.



1791 C.E.

The Bill of Rights in the United States Constitution protects important individual liberties. The Sixth Amendment guarantees a "speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury" in criminal proceedings. The Seventh Amendment provides "the right to trial by jury shall be preserved" in civil suits where the amount in controversy exceeds twenty dollars.



## References

Egyptian Law, Britannica; Constitutions of Clarendon, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School; The Magna Carta Project; Bill of Rights, National Constitution Center.

To learn more about the 7th Amendment, please visit [www.texaswatchfoundation.org](http://www.texaswatchfoundation.org).

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