

Taking notes boosts memory of jurors, new study finds

June 21 2016



Credit: University of Liverpool

Jurors who are allowed to take and review notes during court trials are less likely to forget critical evidence, a new University of Liverpool study has found.

This finding has important implications for justice, as [jurors](#) who forget critical trial evidence often reach different verdicts to those who remember it.

There are variations in practice both between and within judicial systems as to whether jurors can take notes during a trial. In the UK, for example, jurors can take notes although they are not always told this and they are given no opportunity to review their notes prior to reaching a verdict.

Memory testing

In a new study, published in *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, Dr Craig Thorley looked at whether or not note taking helps jurors to recall trial evidence and whether or not being able to review these notes afterwards offers any additional benefits.

144 jury eligible adults took on the role of mock jurors in an experiment that involved watching a video of a murder trial that took place in the America in 1992. Three-quarters of the mock jurors were allowed to take notes while watching the trial. One-third of these note takers then reviewed their notes for ten minutes, one-third mentally reviewed the trial only, and one-third completed a filler task to prevent any form of reviewing. The remaining jurors took no notes during the trial and also completed a filler task afterwards. All mock jurors then had their [memory](#) of the trial assessed.

The experiment found that the process of note taking alone enhanced the mock jurors' memory of trial evidence. Moreover, note taking jurors who reviewed their notes had superior memory of the trial than those note takers who did not review their notes.

Growing evidence

Dr Thorley, who is based at the University's Institute of Psychology, Health and Society, said: "There is now a growing body of evidence that note taking during trials enhances jurors' memory of trial evidence and this improves their decision making when reaching verdicts.

"This research emphasises the importance of note taking as an aid to remembering trial evidence but also shows that permitting jurors to review their notes, which is something courts do not typically do, further enhances their memory of trial evidence. I would therefore strongly recommend courts permit jurors to take [notes](#) during a trial and then give jurors time to review them prior to reaching a verdict."

More information: Craig Thorley. Note Taking and Note Reviewing Enhance Jurors' Recall of Trial Information, *Applied Cognitive Psychology* (2016). [DOI: 10.1002/acp.3240](https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.3240)

Provided by University of Liverpool

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