Benefits of a trial jury:

• By taking the power of deciding issues of fact away from the judge, the jury system reduces the amount of power that is concentrated in the hands of the state. The state is accountable to its citizens.
• Because jurors must participate in the justice system, they feel that they have a connection to it. Citizens who serve on juries gain an understanding of how the justice system really works.
• Judges are part of an educational elite, which may color the way that they view the world. A group of jurors will have varied life experiences.
• Judges may be ideologically authoritarian. They may feel more sympathetic to the prosecution, or to police.
• “Safety in numbers” – one person may make a mistake, or be influenced by bias or emotion. It is unlikely, however, that twelve people will make the same mistake, or all be overcome by emotion.

Drawbacks of the jury system.

• Jurors are not lawyers, and they may find it hard to understand and apply the law to the facts in complex cases.
• Jurors are more likely to be shocked by certain testimony than professional judges and lawyers.
• Jurors may be more moved by emotion than professional lawyers and judges.
• Choosing a jury is time-consuming, and the whole process is much more expensive than having a trial with just a judge.
• Because jurors are not lawyers, they must be protected from confusing and prejudicial evidence. Therefore, the jury system requires complex rules of evidence.
• Many things can go wrong in a jury trial which require dismissing the jury and starting again.