



PARLIAMENTARY  
EDUCATION SERVICE

Parliament Explained 5

# Debates in Parliament

Debates in Parliament allow opinions to be discussed and decisions to be reached.



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# Debates in Parliament

## Introduction

### How are decisions reached in Parliament?

Both Houses of Parliament reach their decisions by means of debates. Every year the House of Commons and House of Lords spend hundreds of hours debating. Many of the debates are about proposed laws; others simply allow the opinions of MPs and Lords to be heard. Some debates involve matters of national or international importance; others involve matters of local importance to just a small area of the country. Sometimes individual MPs and Lords have the chance to choose subjects for debate. It is important, therefore, to understand how the system of debates works, and why so much of Parliament's business is conducted in this way.



## General debates

### Why have debates at all?

Some of you will have taken part in school debates and will already know how a debate works. For those of you who have not, a debate is a discussion that is conducted according to a particular set of rules. All debates are based on a motion. At school, for example, you might debate the motion that 'This House believes that the requirement to wear school uniform is outdated' or that 'This House believes that fourteen year olds should be allowed to ride motor bikes'. The reason for having a motion is to ensure that everyone knows exactly what is being debated. The motion also divides the participants into two clear sides arguing for and against the motion. Some people think this is a bad thing and that it would be better to have a general discussion in which a number of viewpoints are expressed. However, without the focus that a motion provides, it would be more difficult for the debate to result in a decision. The rules of debate give both discipline and a sense of direction to a discussion.

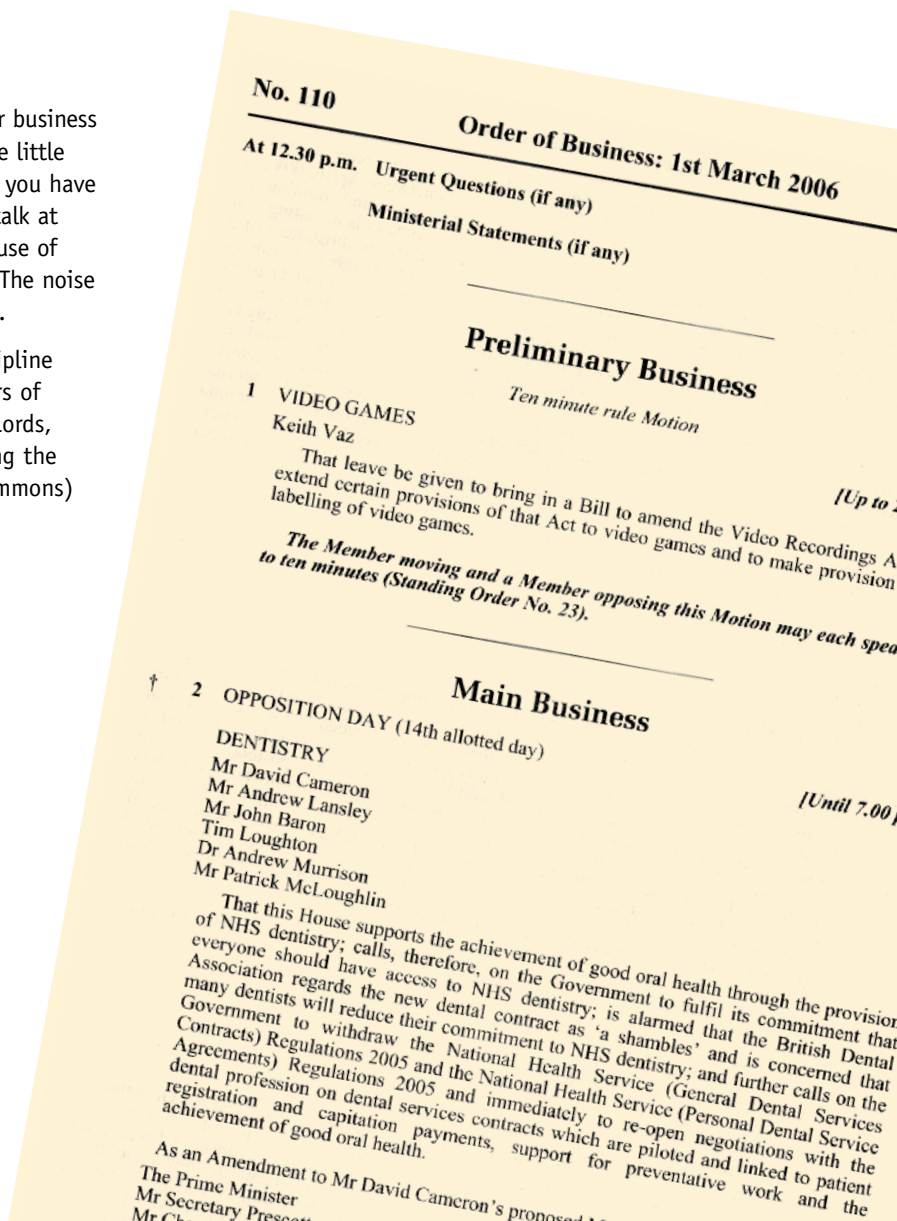
## Debates in Parliament

Both Houses of Parliament conduct the majority of their business in the form of debates. Vague discussions would achieve little and would waste an enormous amount of time. Perhaps you have occasionally heard a class of thirty pupils all trying to talk at once? Can you imagine what it would be like in the House of Commons if several hundred MPs tried to do the same? The noise would be deafening and nothing would ever be decided.

It is, therefore, generally agreed that a degree of discipline is needed for parliamentary discussions. Both Chambers of Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, are well laid out for debate with the Government facing the Opposition under the watchful eye of the Speaker (Commons) or the Lord Speaker (Lords).

### What are these rules of debate?

We have already considered the importance of the motion and how this divides those taking part into two clear groups: those in favour and those against. There are also rules governing the way in which the two arguments are put forward. There are usually one or two principal speakers in favour of the motion, and the same number against it. Those speaking against may put down an amendment to the original motion to allow their beliefs to be recorded. After the principal speakers anyone else wishing to speak can then rise and make their contribution. MPs address all their comments to the chairman, not to each other. If tempers become heated, it is the chairman who will step in to control the debate. The chairman usually decides when the discussion should end. The last person to speak is normally a principal speaker for the motion. He or she winds up the debate by replying to the arguments put forward by the opposition. A vote is then taken. If there are more votes for the motion, then the motion is carried. If not, the motion is defeated. Those who choose not to vote are said to abstain. If the voting results in a tie, the chairman may decide one way or the other by using his or her casting (deciding) vote.

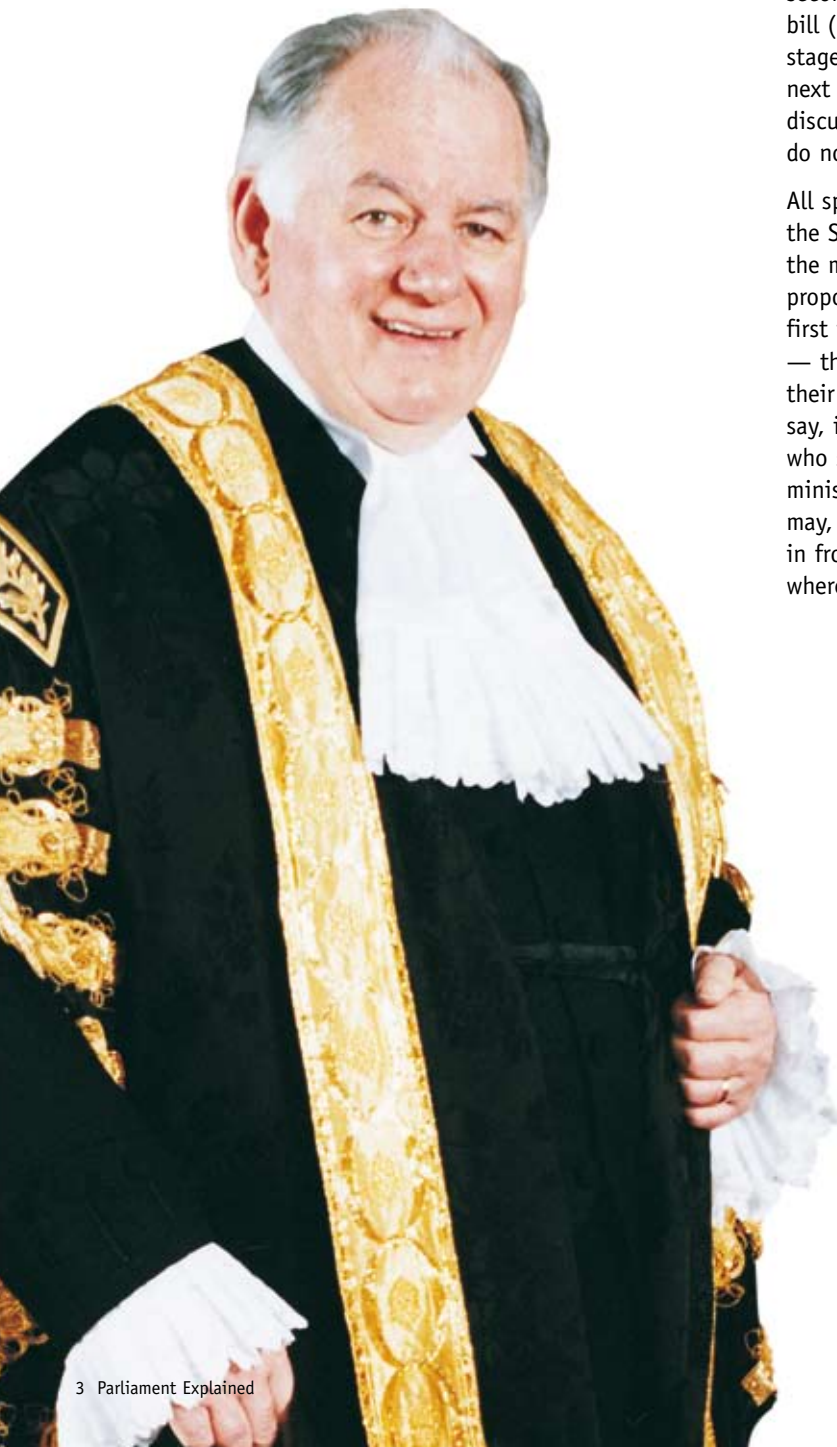




# The House of Commons

## Who chairs the debates?

Debates in the House of Commons are chaired by the Speaker who, sitting on the raised chair between the two sides, is in a good position to control proceedings. Although the Speaker will have begun his or her career in Parliament as a member of one of the parties, he or she will have abandoned any links with that party after being elected Speaker. The Speaker is the neutral chairman of debates. He or she has to be completely unbiased and must not show favouritism towards any party. A new Speaker is elected by the Members of the House of Commons either after a general election or when the previous Speaker has died or retired. The Members always elect someone who they can respect and whose authority they will obey. The Speaker has three deputies who can take the Chair if required.



## What happens during Commons debates?

Debates in the House of Commons are in many ways like school debates. All debates in the House of Commons are based on a motion. Often the motion will be considerably longer than anything debated in schools. Matters discussed in the Commons may be extremely complicated. It is most important that Members should know exactly what they are supporting or opposing. For example; the motion on page 2 was tabled by the Official Opposition in 2006 and the amendment was proposed by the Government. You can see from this that nobody should have been in any doubt as to exactly what was being debated. This particular debate involved a subject of general interest – health. However, a large proportion of the debates in the Commons concern proposed laws (legislation). Once again all discussions are held in the form of debates and each one is based on a motion. For example, the motion ‘That the Bill be now read a second time’ would be inviting the House to decide whether a bill (proposed law) should be allowed to complete its second stage (known as a Second Reading) and to proceed to the next stage. Some topics that do not require a decision may be discussed on a technical motion such as “That this House do now adjourn”.

All speeches are addressed to the chairman, in this case, the Speaker or his deputy. The principal Member in favour of the motion will speak first. Often the Government will have proposed the motion in which case the Member who speaks first is likely to be a Government minister. The Opposition case — the case against the motion — would then be put forward by their spokesperson. When these front-benchers have had their say, it is then the turn of the back-benchers. These are Members who sit on the back benches and are neither Government ministers nor Opposition spokespersons. Whilst front-benchers may, if they wish, speak from the Despatch Boxes on the table in front of the Speaker, all other Members rise to speak from wherever they are sitting in the House.

Rt Hon Michael Martin MP,  
Speaker of the House of Commons

## Who decides who should speak in a debate?

Whenever a Member finishes speaking it is the Speaker who decides who should speak next. Members who are keen to speak in a particular debate tell the officials in their party who arrange the business (Whips) and also the Speaker. The Speaker is then likely to call upon them to speak at some stage of the debate. At the end of each speech, a number of hopeful MPs who want to speak next will rise to their feet to try to 'catch the Speaker's eye'. In fact, this is often unnecessary, as the Speaker will usually know in advance who particularly wants to speak.

The Speaker will already have worked out roughly how the time should be balanced between Government and Opposition, front-benchers and back-benchers, and between the different viewpoints within each party. Usually Members are called from alternate sides of the House. When the Speaker calls on a Member to speak, the other MPs who rose at the same time will then sit down. Only one Member is allowed to stand and speak at any one time. If a Member wishes to interrupt a speech, he or she will rise to their feet. The Member who is speaking may then sit down and allow an interruption — known as an 'intervention' — to be made in his or her speech, but if he or she refuses to give way, then the Member wishing to interrupt should sit down.

Sometimes tempers rise and several MPs may try to shout at once. The Speaker then has to exert the Chair's authority. You may have seen and heard him on television and radio saying "Order, Order" as he brings the House under control again. Speeches should not be read, although notes can be referred to. After all, the whole point of having a debate is that one Member should follow on from what another has said, not that each should read his or her own speech which was prepared in advance.

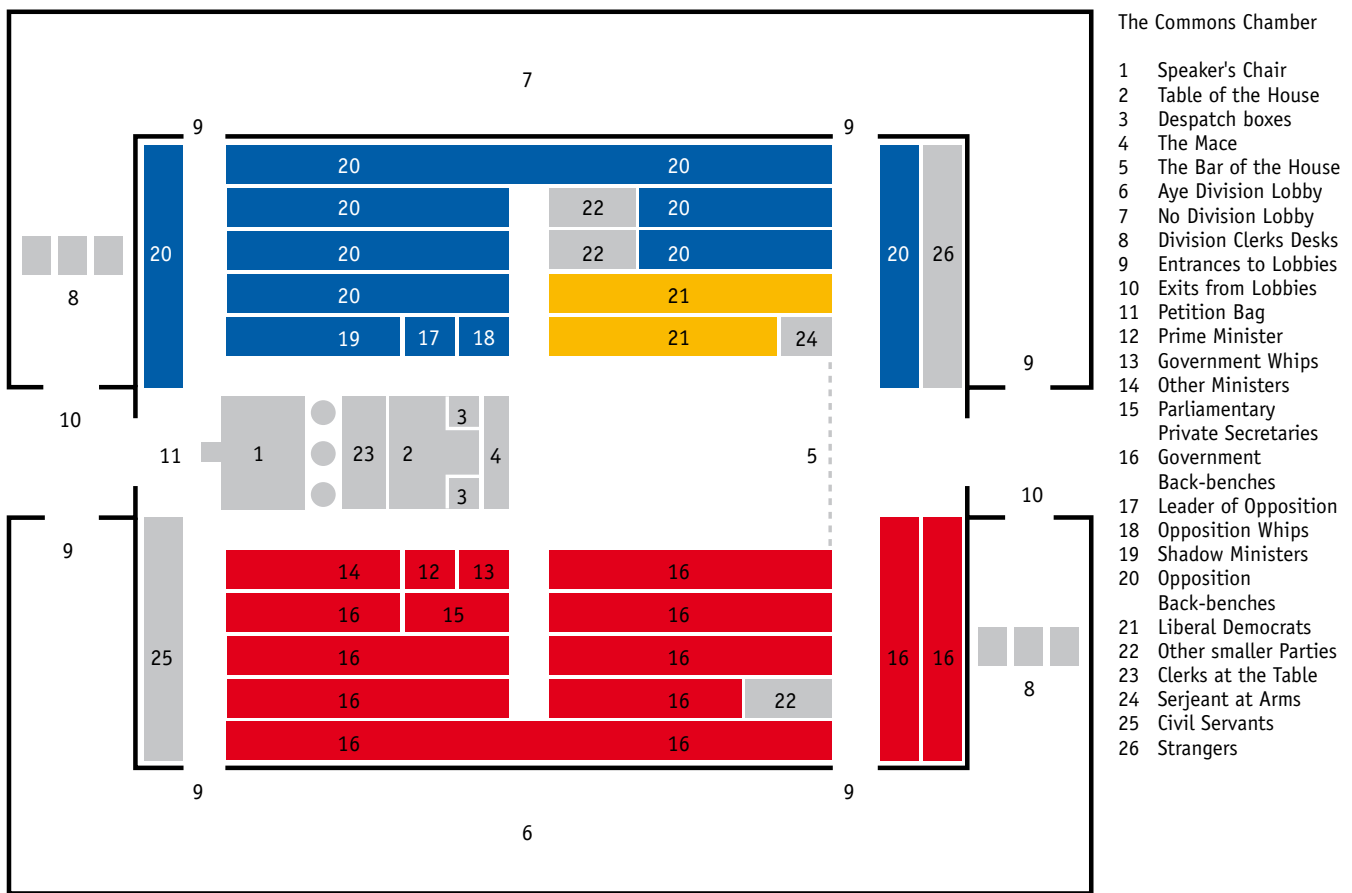
If one Member, in the course of a speech, wishes to refer to another Member, he or she must not mention their name, but should instead refer to "The Honourable Member for..." followed by the name of the constituency — the area represented by an MP. (The United Kingdom is divided into 646 constituencies, each of which is represented by one MP.) This form of address prevents debates from becoming personal attacks on individuals. Those Members, often current and former members of the Cabinet, who are Privy Councillors are referred to as the "Right Honourable Member for...". During the final stages of a debate 'winding up' speeches are usually made by an Opposition and a Government front-bencher.



## How long are debates?

The House of Commons does a great deal of work and is very short of time. For this reason, there is a time limit on most debates — many debates that start between 12.30pm and 2.30pm on a Wednesday, for example, have to end at 7.00pm. It often happens that not everyone who wanted to speak has had a chance to do so. To enable more Members to contribute to a debate, the Speaker will sometimes impose a time limit on backbenchers' speeches. Sometimes, however, there is no time limit on a debate. If it is a debate on a bill there is always a danger that those opposing the bill will try to prolong the debate to stop it making further progress. This kind of delaying tactic (known as 'filibustering') can be stopped by applying the 'closure' — a special motion which will end the debate. If the Speaker and the House both agree to the Closure Motion then the debate will end and a vote will take place.

We have already seen how most debates have a time limit on them. When a bill is being considered a timetable or 'programme motion' may be agreed or, if progress is slow, the Government may seek a limit on the further time that can be spent debating the bill (an allocation of time motion or 'guillotine'). As the Opposition usually disagrees with such a bill, they will generally oppose a guillotine. The Government, however, will have a majority in the House of Commons and will usually be able to see that a guillotine motion is passed.



## How are decisions reached at the end of debates?

At the end of a debate, the House of Commons has to decide whether the motion should be agreed to or negatived (defeated). First of all the Speaker decides whether a vote is really necessary by getting the two sides to express their opinions by calling out "Aye" or "No" to show whether they agree or disagree with the motion. Once again the Speaker follows a set of rules which say exactly how this should be done. When the last Member in favour of the motion has sat down, the Speaker then 'puts the question' — to remind the House what the motion is. If the debate were on the second reading of a bill the Speaker would say, "The Question is that the Bill be now read a second time". He then invites the two sides to express their opinions by saying "as many as are of that opinion say 'Aye'; the contrary 'No' ". The Speaker listens while the two sides shout out "Aye" and "No". He will decide which side sounded more numerous and then say "I think the 'Ayes' (or the 'Noes') have it". If the other side protests, then there has to be a proper vote, called a 'Division'.

## What happens during a Division?

In both Houses of Parliament, the Members vote by walking through two corridors, known as Division Lobbies, which run around the outside of the two Chambers. The plan of the House of Commons above shows the position of the two Lobbies, the Aye Lobby and the No Lobby. The Speaker announces that a division is to take place by giving the order to 'clear the Lobby', to make sure that there are no visitors or staff in either Lobby who might get mixed up with the MPs as they vote. The Division Bell is then rung in all the places where MPs are likely to be such as the library, committee rooms and cafeterias. Each room has a television monitor which relays the sound of the division bell.

As soon as they hear the division bell, Members start to hurry towards the division lobbies. They have only eight minutes in which to reach the lobbies. Many Members have offices outside the Palace of Westminster and it can be quite a rush to get to the lobbies on time. The police clear a path for them as they scurry in from every direction. Two minutes after the question was first put the Speaker repeats it. If his opinion is still challenged, four Tellers — two Members from each side — are named. Their job is to count the Members as they come out of the two lobbies. Each lobby will be manned by one teller for the ayes and one for the noes, so that they can check each other's counting. As soon as the tellers have been chosen, they take up their position at the end of each lobby. They open the doors so the Members can be counted as they file past.

Before they are counted, however, the Members all have to have their names checked off by one of the Clerks who sit at three large desks at the end of each lobby. Members pass through the desks according to the initial letter of their surname.

The record of how each Member voted in a division will be published in the following day's Official Report, known as Hansard. Once they have been registered in this way, Members pass beyond the clerks' desks to be counted by the tellers. The tellers stand beside the doors at the exit from the lobby which are propped open in such a way that only one MP can pass at a time. This makes it easier for the tellers to count them. The last Member through shouts 'All out'. Eight minutes after the Speaker first put the question, all the doors into the lobbies are locked. Any Member arriving after that time will not be able to vote. If however, a Member is within the precincts of the House, but is too ill to walk through the Lobby, he or she can be counted in, if his or her opinion is known. A Member who votes in the wrong lobby by accident cannot undo that vote, but can cancel its effect by crossing to the other lobby and voting on the other side. Members may decide not to vote in a division, in which case they can stay in the Commons Chamber while the division takes place. Members not voting are said to abstain, although there is no way of recording this. The tellers then line up, enter the chamber and approach the table. The senior teller on the winning side gives the numbers to a clerk — one of up to three sitting at the table in front of the Speaker.

In a close vote, the Members waiting in suspense can tell who has won as soon as the tellers enter the Chamber as the senior teller for the winning side is always on the right. The clerk passes the figures to the Speaker who formally announces the result and adds "So the 'Ayes' (or 'Noes') have it". This will be the end of the matter unless — very rarely — there is a tie.

## What happens if there is a tie?

On the rare occasion when both the Ayes and the Noes have the same number of votes, the Speaker will use a casting (deciding) vote. There are conventions — established traditions — as to how the Speaker will cast his or her vote. A decision should never be made solely on the vote of the Speaker. If the decision is on, for example, a motion to bring about change then the Speaker will vote 'No' so as to leave things as they are. If a tied vote occurs during the passage of legislation then the Speaker votes 'Aye' in order to allow the bill to proceed to the next stage where Members will have further opportunities to debate and vote again.

## Other debates

As well as debates in the House of Commons Chamber, MPs also debate in the Westminster Hall chamber. This provides additional time for debates (e.g. on topics raised by individual Members) that could only be accommodated in the House of Commons itself at unsocial hours. Debates on the committee stages of bills usually take place in General Committees rather than in the House of Commons Chamber. Further information about the House of Commons can be found in Parliament Explained booklet No 2.

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<p>Reid, Mr. Alan Rifkind, <i>rh</i> Sir Malcolm Robathan, Mr. Andrew Robertson, Hugh Robinson, Mrs. Iris Robinson, Mr. Peter Rogerson, Mr. Dan Rowen, Paul Ruffley, Mr. David Russell, Bob Sanders, Mr. Adrian Scott, Mr. Lee Selous, Andrew Shapps, Grant Shepherd, Mr. Richard Simpson, Mr. Keith Smith, Sir Robert Soames, Mr. Nicholas Spelman, Mrs. Caroline Spicer, Sir Michael Spink, Bob Spring, Mr. Richard Stanley, <i>rh</i> Sir John Steen, Mr. Anthony Streeter, Mr. Gary Stuart, Mr. Graham Stunell, Andrew Swayne, Mr. Desmond Swinson, Jo Swire, Mr. Hugo Syms, Mr. Robert Taylor, Mr. Ian</p>	<p>Taylor, Matthew Taylor, Dr. Richard Teather, Sarah Thurso, John Tredinnick, David Turner, Mr. Andrew Vaizey, Mr. Edward Vara, Mr. Shailesh Viggers, Peter Villiers, Mrs. Theresa Walker, Mr. Charles Wallace, Mr. Ben Walter, Mr. Robert Waterson, Mr. Nigel Watkinson, Angela Webb, Steve Whittingdale, Mr. John Widdicombe, <i>rh</i> Miss Ann Wiggin, Bill Williams, Hywel Willis, Mr. Phil Willott, Jenny Wilshire, Mr. David Wilson, Mr. Rob Wright, Jeremy Yeo, Mr. Tim Young, <i>rh</i> Sir George Younger-Ross, Richard</p>	<p>Drew, Mr. David Dunwoody, Mrs. Gwyneth Eagle, Angela Eagle, Maria Efford, Clive Ellman, Mrs. Louise Engel, Natascha Emmis, Jeff Etherington, Bill Field, <i>rh</i> Mr. Frank Fisher, Mark Fiello, Mr. Robert Flint, Caroline Flynn, Paul Follett, Barbara Foster, Mr. Michael (<i>Worcester</i>) Gapes, Mike George, <i>rh</i> Mr. Bruce Gerrard, Mr. Neil Gibson, Dr. Ian Gilroy, Linda Godsiff, Mr. Roger Goodman, Helen Griffith, Nia Griffiths, Nigel Grogan, Mr. John Gwynne, Andrew Hain, <i>rh</i> Mr. Peter Hall, Mr. Mike Hall, Patrick Hamilton, Mr. David Hamilton, Mr. Fabian Hanson, Mr. David Harman, <i>rh</i> Ms Harriet Havard, Mr. Dai Healey, John Henderson, Mr. Doug Hendrick, Mr. Mark Hepburn, Mr. Stephen Heppell, Mr. John Hesford, Stephen Hewitt, <i>rh</i> Ms Patricia Heyes, David Hill, <i>rh</i> Keith Hillier, Meg Hodge, <i>rh</i> Margaret Hodgson, Mrs. Sharon Hoey, Kate Hood, Mr. Jimmy Hoon, <i>rh</i> Mr. Geoffrey Hope, Phil Hopkins, Kelvin Howarth, <i>rh</i> Mr. George Hoy, Dr. Kim</p>	<p>Keen, Alan Keen, Ann Kelly, <i>rh</i> Ruth Kemp, Mr. Fraser Kennedy, <i>rh</i> Jane Khabra, Mr. Piaras S. Khan, Mr. Sadiq Kidney, Mr. David Kilfoyle, Mr. Peter Kumar, Dr. Ashok Ladyman, Dr. Stephen Lammy, Mr. David Laxton, Mr. Bob Lazarowicz, Mark Lepper, David Levitt, Tom Lewis, Mr. Ivan Linton, Martin Lloyd, Tony Love, Mr. Andrew Lucas, Ian Mackinlay, Andrew MacShane, <i>rh</i> Mr. Denis Mactaggart, Fiona Mahmood, Mr. Khalid Malik, Mr. Shahid Mallaber, Judy Mann, John Marnis, Rob Marsden, Mr. Gordon Marshall, Mr. David Marshall-Andrews, Mr. Robert Martlew, Mr. Eric McAvoy, <i>rh</i> Mr. Thomas McCafferty, Chris McCarthy, Kerry McCarthy-Fry, Sarah McCartney, <i>rh</i> Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Siobhain McDonagh, Dr. Alasdair McDonnell, John McDonnell, John McFadden, Mr. Pat McFall, <i>rh</i> Mr. John McGovern, Mr. Jim McGuire, Mrs. Anne McIsaac, Shona Meacher, <i>rh</i> Mr. Mick Meale, Mr. Alan Michael, <i>rh</i> Mr. Alan Milburn, <i>rh</i> Mr. David Miliband, <i>rh</i> Mr. David Miliband, Edward Miller, Andrew Mitchell, Mr. Au- Moffatt, Anne Moffatt, Laura Mole, Chris Mole, Mrs. Mrs.</p>
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**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Andrew Rosindell and**  
**Mr. Crispin Blunt**

**NOES**

Abbott, Ms Diane  
Ainger, Nick  
Ainsworth, *rh* Mr. Bob  
Alexander, *rh* Mr. Douglas  
Allen, Mr. Graham  
Anderson, Mr. David  
Anderson, Janet  
Armstrong, *rh* Hilary  
Atkins, Charlotte  
Austin, John  
Bailey, Mr. Adrian  
Baird, Vera  
Barlow, Ms Celia  
Barnes, *rh* Mr. Kevin  
Byrne, Mr. Liam  
Caborn, *rh* Mr. Richard  
Cairns, David  
Campbell, Mr. Alan  
Campbell, Mr. Ronnie  
Caton, Mr. Martin  
Cawsey, Mr. Ian  
Challen, Colin  
Chapman, Ben  
Chaytor, Mr. David  
Clapham, Mr. Michael  
Clark, Ms Katy  
Clark, Paul  
Clarke, *rh* Mr. Tom  
Clelland, Mr. David  
Clwyd, *rh* Ann  
Clydesdale, Mr. Vernon



# The House of Lords

## How are debates carried out in the House of Lords?

House of Lords debates serve the same function as House of Commons debates, but there are a number of key differences in the types of debates and the way they are conducted. Another important difference is in the position of the Lord Speaker, who acts as the equivalent of the Speaker in the Commons. The Lord Speaker presides over debates in the Lords from a special seat, known as the Woolsack.

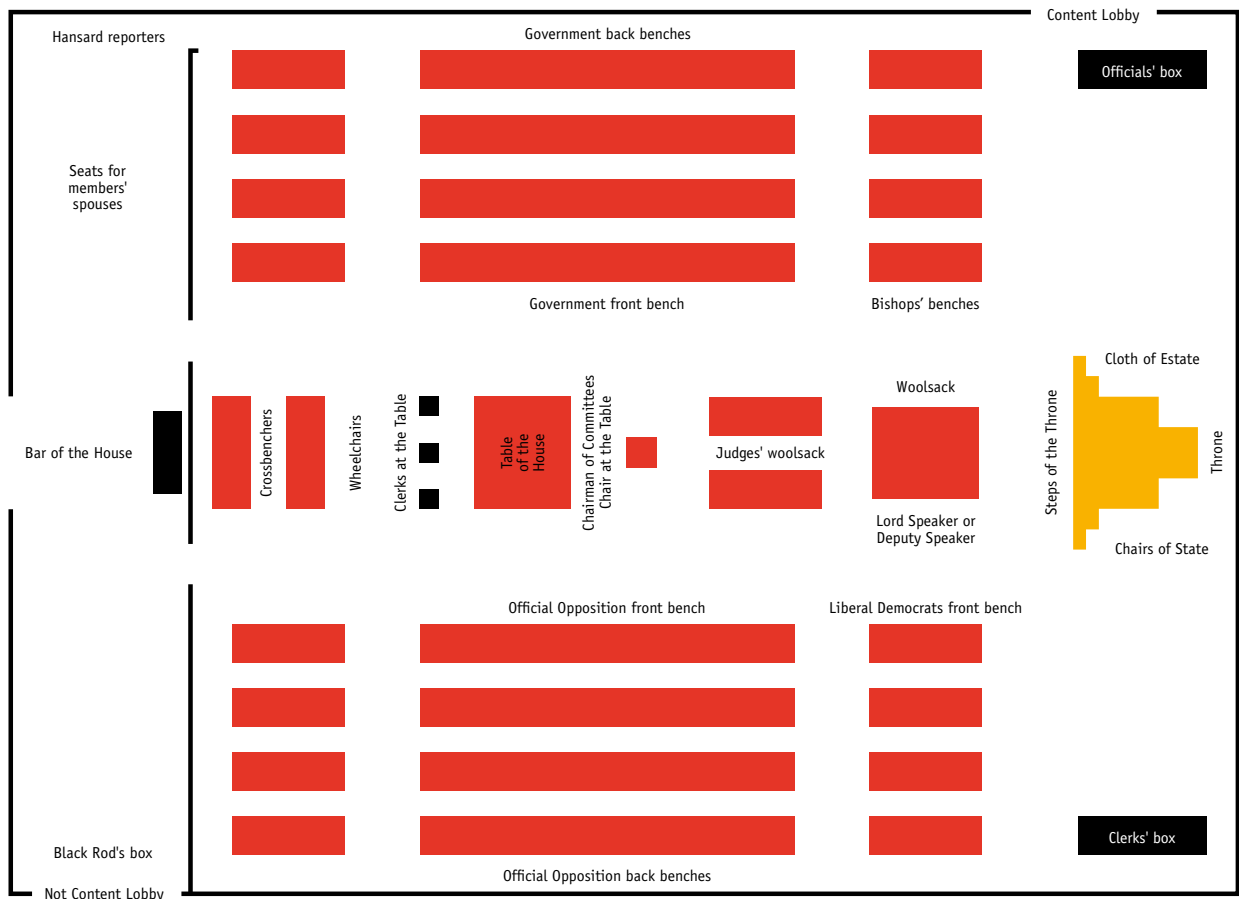
## Is the Speaker's role different in the House of Lords?

Unlike the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Lord Speaker is politically neutral and is elected by Members of the House.

The Lord Speaker does not control the proceedings during a debate. You will never hear the Lord Speaker shouting "Order, Order" as it is assumed that the Lords themselves will keep order during their debates. On the whole, debates in the House of Lords are calmer than those in the Commons. If, however, the temperature did rise, there would be a chorus of 'Order, Order', from Lords sitting all round the Chamber, rather than from the Lord Speaker.

Another difference between the Lord Speaker's position and that of the Speaker of the House of Commons is that he/she does not decide who shall speak next in a debate: the practice of 'catching the Speaker's eye' in the House of Commons has no equivalent in the House of Lords. Instead, there is a list of speakers. The order of speaking will have been arranged in advance by agreement between the party Whips, together with a representative of the Crossbenchers — those who sit on the crossbenches, between the Government and the Opposition, and have no party ties (see plan). The Government

### The Chamber of the House of Lords





Whips' Office issue this list of speakers before the debate, but Members can take part in a debate without having given notice beforehand, although it is not encouraged. If a number of Members rise to speak at the same time, most of them will normally sit down immediately, allowing the remaining Member to speak. If however, more than one Member remains on his feet, there will be cries of "Order, Order" from all around the Chamber. This usually encourages all but one to sit down. The remaining Member will then speak.

Unlike the House of Commons, where all speeches are directed towards the Speaker, all speeches in the Lords are addressed to the House in general and begin 'My Lords'. If one Lord making a speech wishes to refer to another Member, he will do so in a particular way, e.g. 'The Noble Lord, The Lord Bloggs', or in the case of a Baroness 'The Noble Baroness, The Baroness Bloggs'. This is rather like the procedure in the House of Commons where Members are not referred to by name. As in the House of Commons notes can be referred to, but speeches should not be read. Long speeches are discouraged.

### What types of debates take place?

Many debates in the Lords, like those in the Commons, are concerned with the various stages of law-making. The House of Lords, however, holds more general debates than the House of Commons. There are three main types of debate:

#### *On legislation:*

The Second Reading of a bill, for example, is an opportunity to debate, in general terms, what the bill is about.

#### *General debates:*

One day a week, Thursday, is set aside for general debates. Sometimes there is one long debate, sometimes three time-limited debates, or two shorter debates. The sort of issues that are debated include:

- Assisted dying for the terminally ill
- Rainforests and logging
- Sport in the community
- British identity and citizenship
- Energy policy: nuclear power





### *Short debates*

These are essentially questions that can be debated. They are a bit like adjournment debates in the Commons but involve more than just one speaker. They last for 1½ hours and usually take place during the dinner break on days when legislation is being considered or at the end of a day's business. Some of the subjects debated in 2005 included:

- Faith schools
- Street children in Latin America
- Tourism
- Adoption

There is usually no division at the end of a debate and the motion is simply withdrawn at the end of the discussion, after the Lords have had an opportunity to give their views. The opinion of the House is sometimes expressed at the end of some general debates, and on all debates on proposed laws. This is done by the two sides calling out their opinions and, if there is any doubt, by voting in a division.

### *How are divisions (votes) organised?*

The main function of the Lord Speaker is to "Put the Question". Instead of 'Ayes' and 'Noes', however, the Lords will be divided into 'Contents' (those voting 'Yes') and 'Not-Contents' (those voting 'No'). At the end of a debate, the Lord Speaker or his/her deputy repeats the terms of the motion before the House. He/she then says 'As many as are of that opinion will say 'Content', the contrary 'Not-Content'. If only one side responds, he/she says 'The Contents (or Not-Contents) have it'. If there is a response from both sides, he/she judges which side has more supporters and then says 'I think the Contents (or Not-Contents) have it'. If the other side does not challenge his/her decision he/she then says 'The Contents (or Not-Contents) have it'. That is then the end of the matter.

If his/her opinion is challenged, there has to be a division. 'Clear the Bar' orders the Lord Speaker. The division bells ring, two tellers are chosen from each side, and the House then divides. The Contents walk through the lobby to the right of the Lord Speaker and the Not-Contents through the one on his left. The procedure is very similar to that in the House of Commons. When all Members have voted, the numbers are communicated to the Lord Speaker, who announces the result.

For further information on the House of Lords see Parliament Explained No 6.

## Attending debates

### How you can attend debates?

#### *Debates in the House of Commons*

The House of Commons sits at 2.30pm on Mondays and Tuesdays, 11.30am on Wednesdays, and 10.30am on Thursdays, except during the recess periods at Christmas, February, Easter, late Spring Bank Holiday and the Summer. Recesses are at roughly the same time as school and college holidays. The House also sits on 13 Fridays per year at 9.30am to consider Private Members' Bills.

Constituents can request tickets to attend a debate from their MP. This is the only way to guarantee admission at popular times such as Prime Minister's Question Time. Visitors without tickets should join the public queue outside St. Stephen's Entrance. Those at the front of the queue will be admitted after about 4.00pm on Mondays and Tuesdays, at 1.00pm on Wednesdays, 12.00 midday on Thursdays and at 9.30am on Fridays. Those wishing to avoid a lengthy wait are advised to consider visiting on Monday and Tuesday evenings and on Thursday afternoons when the demand for places in the Gallery is generally less. In addition, all MPs have a small number of Gallery tickets which they may be able to allocate to schools in their constituency. The Education Unit has an allocation of Gallery tickets and can arrange for a small number of students to attend debates.

Debates in Westminster Hall take place on Tuesdays between 9.30am and 2pm, on Wednesdays between 9.30am and 11.30am and between 2.30pm and 5pm, and on Thursdays between 2.30pm and 5.30pm.

#### *Debates in the House of Lords*

The House of Lords sits at 2.30pm until not later than 10pm on Monday and Tuesday, at 3pm on Wednesday and at 11am on Thursdays. If it sits on a Friday it usually starts at 11am. The House of Lords has similar, but not exactly the same, recess periods to the House of Commons.

Both Members of the House of Lords and MPs can obtain up to sixteen Gallery tickets for the House of Lords. Again, a small number of Gallery tickets are available for school parties from the Education Service. School parties can also join the public queue outside St. Stephen's Entrance.

## Find Out More

#### *Archives*

Archives from 1497, including original Acts of Parliament, are kept in The Parliamentary Archives which is open to the public. Contact: 020 7219 3074. E-mail: [archives@parliament.uk](mailto:archives@parliament.uk)

#### *Hansard*

The day's proceedings are printed in the Official Report, (separate volumes are produced for the Commons and Lords) referred to as Hansard after its original printer. It is also available at **www.parliament.uk** by 8.00 the following morning, or an unedited version is available approximately three hours behind real time.

#### *Television*

The televising of Parliament was pioneered by the House of Lords in 1985, followed by the House of Commons in 1989. The proceedings of both Houses can be seen on the BBC's parliamentary channel when the House is sitting.

#### *Website*

Go to **www.parliament.uk** for general information on the role and function of both Houses, or details of membership, future business, legislation and Select Committee activity. It is also possible to view a live **webcast** of House proceedings at the same address.

A website for young people can be found at **www.explore.parliament.uk**

#### *Education enquiries*

Applications for Gallery tickets or educational visits and resources can be obtained from:

Parliamentary Education Service  
Room 604  
Norman Shaw Building (North)  
London SW1A 2TT

Tel: 020 7219 2105

Fax: 020 7219 0818

E-mail: [edunit@parliament.uk](mailto:edunit@parliament.uk)

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