



Maiden speeches: guidance for new Members

Your maiden speech will be an important personal moment and a significant event in your parliamentary career. The staff of the House are ready to help you prepare for it.

1. A maiden speech is usually uncontroversial and fairly brief, including a tribute to the Member's predecessor in the seat, irrespective of party, and favourable remarks about the constituency. It is a tradition that a maiden speech is heard without interruption and that the next speaker praises the new MP's first contribution.
2. The Library can provide the speeches of predecessors in your constituency and any other information you might need, including key constituency statistics and details of boundary changes and of previous Members (x3666). Hansard can provide a specially printed copy of your maiden speech.
3. The debate on the Queen's Speech, which usually lasts six days, provides the first opportunity to make a maiden speech, and it is usually possible for ten or more new Members to do so on each day. Thereafter, opportunities depend on the business of the House—a full day's debate on, say, second reading of a bill provides more opportunities than a day on which the House is considering several different items of business in a series of short debates. In all such debates, your speech will have to relate—to some extent at least—to the business under discussion.
4. When you have decided to make your maiden speech, you should write to the Speaker saying on which day you wish to do so. In view of the number of new Members, it cannot be guaranteed that you will be called on a particular day. If you contact the Speaker's Office they will be able to let you know the likelihood of your being called on that day.
5. Taking the oath or affirming is the essential requirement for participating in any parliamentary proceedings and has statutory force: a Member who has not taken the oath may not sit in the House during a debate or vote, upon penalty of having his or her seat declared vacant.
6. Members may choose from the following options:
 - wait to make your maiden speech before speaking at all in the Chamber
 - take part in questions but seek to speak in debate only when you are ready to deliver a maiden speech
 - take part fully in proceedings without making a traditional maiden speech.
7. The Chair will:
 - not discourage any new Member from taking part in proceedings before a maiden speech has been made
 - give preference in calling Members to give maiden speeches to those who have not spoken at all before in the House (e.g., by having asked a Question or made an intervention)
 - not call a Member to deliver a traditional maiden speech if he or she has already made a 'normal' (not a maiden) speech in a debate in the House or Westminster Hall (questions and interventions are not regarded as speeches).

8. These are the things you can do without losing the opportunity to make a traditional maiden speech:
 - a. table a question for oral answer or a topical question – and ask it in the House
 - b. ask a supplementary question during oral questions (including topical questions) or on a statement.
 - c. table questions for written answer
 - d. table early-day motions (including putting down amendments and adding names to other Members' motions).
 - e. table amendments to bills
 - f. take part in any committees
 - g. present a private Member's bill (including supporting such a bill)
 - h. table a ten-minute rule motion
 - i. present a petition
 - j. intervene on another Member's speech.
9. You cannot do the following unless you do not thereafter expect to be called to make a traditional maiden speech:
 - a. make a 'normal' (not a maiden) speech in any debate in the House or in Westminster Hall.
 - b. speak to introduce or oppose a ten-minute rule bill.
 - c. speak while moving an amendment to a bill or motion in the House.

Contacts

If you would like to discuss this guidance, please contact the Table Office, behind the Speaker's Chair end of the Chamber (x3302/3303/3305).