

Learn
amazing
facts!

Discover the UK Parliament!

What is the UK
Parliament?

What is the House
of Commons?

What happens
at an election?

What is the
House of Lords?

Why do we
need laws?

Find out how you can get involved
with the UK Parliament. Come
on in. We'll be your guides.



Welcome to the UK Parliament!

Let's have a look around and find out about the people who work in the UK Parliament.

Ever wondered what MPs or members of the House of Lords do? Well, you can find out about their work and see how they help to make laws.

Journey through time to explore the history of the UK Parliament and discover how the building has survived fire, war and a secret plot to blow it up!

Emma

Dev

Jess



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Once you have found out about this amazing place and the people who work here, decide how you can get involved with your UK Parliament!

What is the UK Parliament?



Let's find out about the different parts of the UK Parliament.

Schools, hospitals, the environment ... lots of things that affect our lives are discussed and decided in Parliament. But what is Parliament?

The UK Parliament is made up of three parts: the **House of Commons**, the **House of Lords** and the King or Queen – known as the **Monarch**.

Parliament (noun)

The UK Parliament is made up of three parts: the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Monarch.

ORIGIN The word 'parliament' comes from the French word *parler* which means 'to speak' and from the Middle English word *parley*, which means to hold a conference to discuss opposing views.



A 'parliament' is also the name for a group of owls.

Did you know?



A hawk is used to scare pigeons away from the Houses of Parliament as their poo damages the building!



The House of Commons

In the House of Commons Chamber, important topics are debated and laws are discussed. It's here that Members of Parliament (MPs) can challenge the work of the Government.

Each MP represents a different area of the United Kingdom, called a constituency.



There are 650 MPs in the House of Commons.



MPs are voted for by people in a general election.



The House of Lords

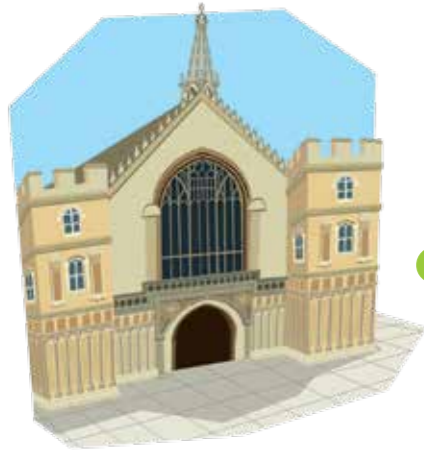
There are about 800 members of the House of Lords. Most are called 'life peers', because they are given membership for their lifetime. Their titles are not passed on to their children. They are chosen for their knowledge and experience, so they can use their special skills to look carefully at new laws.

The Monarch

The third part of the UK Parliament is the Monarch (King or Queen). This role is mainly ceremonial these days. The Monarch meets the Prime Minister once a week to hear what's going on in Parliament, signs any new laws and attends the State Opening of Parliament every year.



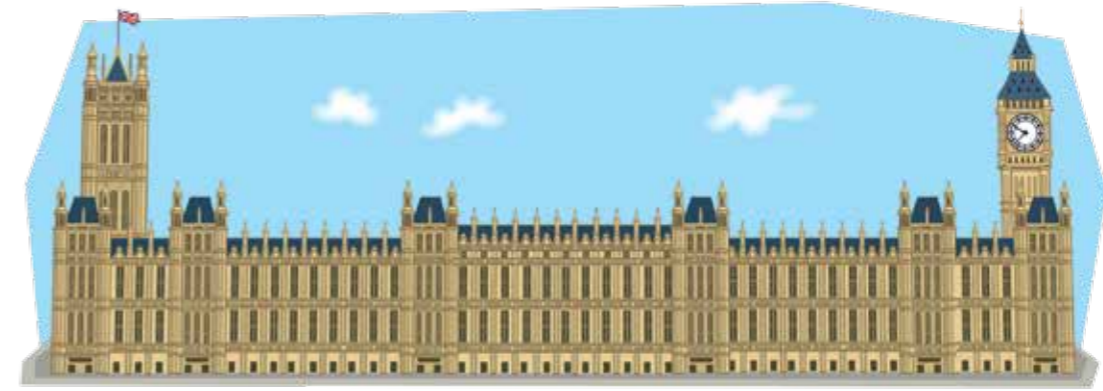
History of the UK Parliament



1097–99
Westminster Hall is built.
It still stands as part of
the UK Parliament today.



1859
Big Ben chimes
for the first time.

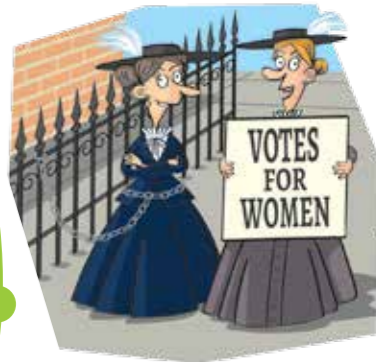


1870
New Palace
of Westminster
is completed.



1872
Voting in
secret is
introduced.

1914–18
1ST WORLD WAR



1918–28
Women get the vote.

1919
First female MP to take a
seat, Nancy Astor.



1992
First female Speaker of
the House of Commons,
Betty Boothroyd.

1939–45
2ND WORLD WAR

1958
Women are allowed to become
members of the House of Lords.

1998
Devolution
– some powers
transferred to
the Scottish
Parliament, the
National Assembly
for Wales and the
Northern Ireland
Assembly.



2006
The House of
Lords elects its first Lord
Speaker, Baroness Hayman.

How do you think
Parliament might
change in the future?

What will happen next?



1215
Magna Carta – this
document ensures, for the
first time, that no one
is above the law, not even
the Monarch.



1834
Fire destroys
most of the
Palace of
Westminster.



1832
Great Reform Act
makes voting in
elections fairer,
but only for men.

1689
Bill of Rights limits
the powers of the
Monarch and sets the
terms for elections,
free speech and the
rights of the people.



1605
5th November
Gunpowder Plot – Guy
Fawkes and several
others plan to blow up
King James in the
House of Lords.



1642–49
ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

1647
Putney Debates – people begin
to meet and openly talk about
every man getting a vote.

1653
After King
Charles I is
overthrown and
sentenced to death,
Oliver Cromwell
becomes Lord Protector.

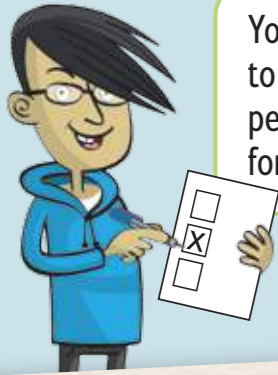


Elections and voting



In the UK, we live in a democracy. This means people can have a say in how the country is run by voting in elections.

The UK has over 64 million people living in it and everyone has different ideas about how they think the UK should be run. To make sure everyone can have a say, we elect MPs to represent our ideas and opinions in Parliament.



You mark an X next to the name of the person you are voting for on a ballot paper.

democracy (noun)

ORIGIN The word 'democracy' comes from the Greek words *demos* which means 'people' and *kratos* which means 'rule'.



WHAT HAPPENS AT AN ELECTION?

General elections usually take place every five years. People who are 18 or over have the chance to vote to choose their local MP. They do this by going to a polling station and choosing from a list of people who want to be elected. If somebody finds it difficult to get to a polling station, they can vote by post instead.

The person with the most votes in each area (called a constituency) becomes an MP. The elected MP represents the people from that area in the House of Commons.

Vote for me, I'll encourage more people to recycle.

Vote for me, I'll make sure our local hospital has enough doctors.



Vote for me, I'll make it the law that cars have to drive slowly near schools.

Most MPs belong to a political party, a group of people who have similar ideas about how they want to run the UK. Before an election, they will try to persuade people to vote for them by explaining why they think their ideas are the best.

ACTIVITY

- Imagine you are running for election as an MP. How would you persuade people to vote for you?
- Research an issue that is important to you and write about it in the rosette.

Have you ever been to vote with someone from your family?



A large white rosette with a scalloped edge, containing several horizontal lines for writing.



What is the UK Government?

The Government is in charge of running the UK. The Prime Minister chooses a team of MPs and members of the House of Lords to help him or her do this.



The UK usually holds a **general election** every five years.

After the election, the party with the most MPs can then form the **Government**.

The leader of the winning party becomes the **Prime Minister** and chooses a team of MPs and members of the House of Lords to form the Government.

MPs and members of the House of Lords who are not part of the winning party become the **Opposition**. They check and challenge the ideas of the Government through debates and questions.



Did you know?

If no one party wins the election it is called a 'hung Parliament'. If this happens, two or more parties might agree to join together to form a coalition government.

So, the Government's job is to run the country.

Yes, and Parliament's job is to check and challenge what the Government does to make sure it is working well for everybody.

The Prime Minister

The Prime Minister is the head of the Government. His or her job is a bit like your headteacher's. At your school, the headteacher manages a team of people who help to make sure your school works well.

The Prime Minister has a similar job. He or she manages a team of ministers who help run the country. Different ministers are responsible for different things like transport, education or the environment. There are ministers for each department in the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Every week, the Prime Minister comes to the House of Commons for half an hour to answer questions from MPs about the work of the Government.

The Prime Minister lives and works at Number 10 Downing Street in London.

If you were Prime Minister what would you do?



ACTIVITY

Prime Minister

What qualities do you think a person needs to make a good Prime Minister? Write your ideas here:



Who's who ... in the House of Commons?



The House of Commons may be beautiful and historic, but it's the people who work there that make it such a vibrant and active place. They work hard so we have laws that protect us and to make sure the UK is a fair place to live.

Let's find out who these people are and how they help us.

MPs

A member of the House of Commons is called an MP, which is short for Member of Parliament. An MP has the important job of representing people from their local area in Parliament.



ACTIVITY

MPs often use email to keep in contact with the people they represent and to find out their views.



What important issue would you email your MP about?

Write your idea for an email to your MP here:



Re: Responsible pet owners

Dear MP,
I have been finding out about how to look after pets and how some people mistreat animals. How can we make sure all pet owners follow laws that protect animals?



Re: Less waste

Dear MP,
Our school's eco-council makes sure we recycle or compost most of our waste. How can we help our wider community to do the same?



Re: Girls and boys are equal

Dear MP,
I have been learning about how girls in some countries are not allowed to go to school. I do not think this is fair. How can I help change this?

What do MPs do ...



... in their local area?

MPs work both at the House of Commons and in their constituency.

MPs hold 'surgeries' where they meet people from their constituency who might have a problem, need help or want the MP to do something for them. Surgeries can take place in local libraries, community halls and even sports centres.

Every week MPs get lots of emails, phone calls and letters. They try to answer every one and have researchers and caseworkers to help them.



... in the House of Commons?

If you are an MP and not a government minister, you are called a backbencher because you aren't sitting on the front bench, even if you belong to the same political party as the Government.

The job of backbenchers is to challenge the Government to make sure it is doing a good job. They do this through asking questions about how the Government is working.

MPs who are not part of the governing party are called the Opposition. They sit on the benches opposite the Government in the House of Commons. There are usually MPs from lots of different political parties on the opposition benches and some who are not part of any political party.

Did you know?

It is an MP's job to represent all the people in his or her constituency, even if they didn't vote for him or her.

Are all MPs part of the Government?



No, some are, but most aren't. Only the Prime Minister and a team of ministers form the Government.



Other jobs in the House of Commons

There are some interesting jobs in the House of Commons and some of them have very unusual names.

Speaker

The Speaker sits at the head of the Chamber and is responsible for making sure the MPs are polite and fair. Debates in the House of Commons can get really noisy. The Speaker makes sure MPs get the opportunity to represent different opinions and has the job of keeping order.

MPs cannot contribute to debates unless the Speaker calls them by name. MPs stand up to catch the Speaker's eye to get a turn to speak.



Order! Order!

In the past, the Speaker had to remain in the Speaker's chair at all times. So, if they needed the toilet they had to go in the Chamber! The Speaker would use a pot kept under the chair and a curtain was drawn around. The MPs would wave their papers and make noises to drown out any sound!

Clerks

Clerks have specialist knowledge about how Parliament works. They sit at the table in front of the Speaker.

Serjeant at Arms

The Serjeant at Arms carries the mace into the Chamber at the start of each day. This ancient job dates back to 1415. The Serjeant is the only person allowed to carry a sword in Parliament.

Not everyone who has a cool job in the House of Commons is human!

This furry friend also has an important job. Sniffer dogs search the Chamber to keep MPs safe from harm.



What a tail-waggingly great job!

What does the House of Commons look like?



This is the House of Commons Chamber. You can come and visit the House of Commons and watch what is happening from the public gallery!

Press gallery

This is where the journalists sit. They write reports for newspapers, TV and radio about the speeches and debates.

Speaker's chair

Clerks' table

OPPOSITION

Serjeant at Arms' seat

GOVERNMENT

Front bench

The front bench is where the Prime Minister and other government ministers sit.

The mace represents the Monarch in the House of Commons. It has to be in the Chamber before the MPs can start a debate.



Did you know?

Around the Houses game rules

You will need: a dice; a counter for each player.

- 1 Before you begin, each player must roll the dice to find out where to start.
- 2 Players must roll a 6 to begin play.
- 3 Move around the board following the instructions.
- 4 If you land on a portcullis, have an extra go.
- 5 The first player to reach Central Lobby wins the game!

Before you play, check out what members of the House of Lords do on pages 16–19!



Around the Houses

If you throw an even number you start in the House of Commons.
If you throw an odd number you start in the House of Lords.

START

To start you must roll a 6 to be nominated as a life peer.

HOUSE OF LORDS

CENTRAL LOBBY FINISH

You have a constituency surgery. Dash to square 25 to catch your train.

You are planning to speak during a debate. Miss a go to prepare your speech.

You are interviewed live on the radio. Move forward 1 square.

You meet a school group to talk about the House of Lords. Go to square 5 to greet them.

You have lots of emails and letters to reply to. Go back 2 spaces to your office to answer them.

There's an important debate in the Chamber. Go back to square 46.

You have lots of emails and letters to reply to. Go back 3 spaces to your office to answer them.

It's Prime Minister's Questions. Move forward 1 square to ask your question.

You ask a question in the Chamber. Move forward 2 spaces.

Meet people campaigning about the environment. Move forward 3 spaces.

You make a change to a draft law (Bill). Move forward 2 spaces.

It's question time in the Chamber. Move forward 1 square to ask the Government your question.

You have lots of emails and letters to reply to. Go back 3 spaces to your office to answer them.

Meet people in your constituency. Move forward 3 spaces.

There's an important debate in the Chamber. Go back to square 46.

You have lots of emails and letters to reply to. Go back 2 spaces to your office to answer them.

START

To start you must roll a 6 to be elected as an MP.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Students from a school in your constituency are visiting Parliament. Go to square 5 to meet them.

You are interviewed for a newspaper. Move forward 1 square.

You are examining a Bill. Miss a go while you look at it in detail.

You have a meeting with people at a local charity. Dash to square 25 to get there on time.

Who's who... in the House of Lords?



There are about 800 members of the House of Lords. Their job is to question and challenge the work of the Government. Members of the House of Lords spend lots of time examining ideas for new laws in detail.

Myth-buster!

Some people think that members of the House of Lords wear fancy robes. Actually, they usually only wear robes once a year for the State Opening of Parliament, the first day of Parliament's year. On every other day they wear normal, smart clothes just like everyone else.



Did you know?

A female member of the House of Lords is called a Baroness.

The House of Lords

The House of Lords is the second Chamber of the UK Parliament.

Many of its members have worked in politics, but many have done other jobs. There are doctors, soldiers, scientists, writers, teachers, police officers, sportspeople and many other professional people in the House of Lords.

Many members of the House of Lords, both present and former, have competed in the Olympics and the Paralympics. They have won over 45 medals ... so far!



What do members of the House of Lords do?

Members of the House of Lords ask questions, debate important issues and examine and suggest changes to plans for new laws.

As many members have professional knowledge in areas such as education and health, they can use this experience to check that the detail in plans for new laws makes sense, is fair and will work for different groups of people. If they think a plan for a new law could be improved they suggest changes.



Specialists and all-rounders!

So, the House of Lords has a wide range of people, some who are experts in one or two areas and some who have general knowledge of many things. In some ways, it's a bit like the different teachers you might have at your school. Some teach you lots of different subjects while others might focus on a specialist subject. Your class teacher probably teaches you lots of different subjects like English, Maths and Science. But you might have other specialist teachers for learning a different language or a musical instrument, or a sports coach if you are part of a school sports team.

Having people that have expertise can be really helpful!



Yes, and it's the same in the House of Lords, too. They use their expertise to examine the plans for new laws and recommend changes.

Members of the House of Lords spend a lot of their time debating the Government's plans for new laws. Often, really important or complicated debates carry on past 10pm, so it can be a very long day.

Wow! That's past my bedtime!



Why do we need laws?

So, you know all about rules, don't you?

If you know what rules are, then you already know a bit about laws and how they work. Let's look at how rules and laws are similar and different. I bet you have a list of rules for your class, maybe you even helped write those rules.



Class Rules!

We look after our belongings.

We always tell the truth.

We are kind and friendly to others.

We raise our hands when we want to speak.

We always try our best.



So why do you think we need rules?

What would your school be like without rules?

People in communities like schools or clubs often make up rules to help everyone get along. Rules make sure things are fair and everyone is safe. If people break rules they might be told off or they may have a punishment of some sort.

There are rules for games too. They make sure the games are fair.

What happens if somebody breaks the rules?



Laws

Laws are based on the same idea as rules, BUT they are different.

Rules can affect small groups of people, but laws can affect us all.

We don't make laws. Laws are made in Parliament. MPs and members of the House of Lords debate and vote on ideas for new laws to make sure they are the best they can be.

If people break the law, then they are doing something illegal and they might have to pay a fine, or even go to prison.

Laws are made to:

- keep us safe and protect us
- ensure people behave so they don't hurt themselves or others
- make sure everything is fair and people can access their rights
- solve conflicts (fights)

Hmmm – laws sound very important!



Let's look at an idea for a law

This idea is to tax sugary drinks. That means you could pay more money for the drinks that have the highest sugar content. So a litre of a sugary drink could cost around 25p more!

How could paying more for a sugary drink help us?

54 comments



This law could **change how people behave**. It could help people drink fewer sugary drinks. That will keep people **safe** because too much sugar is linked to diseases such as obesity and type 2 diabetes.

It also means that the people who make sugary drinks might think more carefully about how much sugar they put in them. If they make drinks that are healthier, then we all benefit.

Also, the Government may make **money** from the tax. This money could be used to fund sport in primary schools to help children become healthier too.

This law could mean that people think more carefully about buying sugary drinks. A can of fizzy drink can have up to nine teaspoons of sugar in it. That is more than the recommended amount of sugar for a child for one day.





So, Parliament makes laws that can affect us all?

Yes, both the House of Commons and the House of Lords look at the plans for new laws to make sure they work well for everyone when they become law.



ACTIVITY

Is it a rule or a law? Can you sort them?

Draw a line from each rule and law to the correct box.

Dropping litter in the street is not allowed – you can be fined.

Stealing is illegal.

Free education for children.

Listen to people when they are speaking.

The speed limit on motorways is 70mph.

Rules

Laws

If the dice lands on 6 you get another go.

Walk in the corridors.

Be kind to each other.

You can't use your hand to touch the ball in football unless you are the goalie.

Writing on walls without permission in public places is illegal.

Did you know?

Sometimes a Bill will move between the House of Commons and the House of Lords lots of times before it is agreed. When this happens it is known as 'ping-pong'!

QUICK FACTS

- An idea for a new law is called a Bill.
- Bills are discussed and debated in the House of Commons and the House of Lords.
- If both Houses agree on a Bill, then it is signed by the Monarch. This is called Royal Assent and the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament and part of the UK law.

Which laws affect me?

Now we know about rules and laws.

Most laws are for grown-ups, but are there any laws that have been made for children? Well, there are some laws that have been specially written with children in mind.

Protecting children

Films shown in the UK need an age rating, it's the law! An age rating lets people know whether a film is age appropriate. This law is in place to protect children and young people from watching things they might find frightening or upsetting.

Video games have age ratings too. If a person is found selling a video game to someone under age they could face a big fine or even go to prison!



Education for all children

In 1870 something amazing happened – education became compulsory for children up to the age of 10. Before that, they may have had to work. Now, all children have access to free education and can attend both primary and secondary school.



Devolution

The UK Parliament is the main law-making body, but some powers have been 'devolved' to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the National Assembly for Wales and the Scottish Parliament. Those institutions now have the power to make laws about some issues, such as education or health, in those parts of the UK.



Let's think. How do laws protect people, make things fairer or help people stay healthy?

What would happen if we didn't have laws?



How can I get involved?

The UK Parliament is your Parliament and your thoughts and ideas matter! Let's find out about how some young people are getting involved.



GAINING SUPPORT

Lucy Gavaghan started a petition when she was 14 to ban supermarkets selling eggs laid by hens in cages. Her petition got so much support that supermarkets have made a promise to stop selling eggs from caged hens by 2025.



SPEAKING UP

Alex Rukin was just nine years old when he became the youngest person to give his opinion to a committee in Parliament. He gave his opinion about plans for a new rail link near his home.



DEBATING

Members of the UK Youth Parliament are aged between 11 and 18 years old. Every year, they come to the House of Commons to hold a debate about issues that are important to them.



If you feel seriously about an issue, something in the news or an idea for a law that Parliament is talking about, then you can get involved.



What is important to you?

Just like Lucy, Alex and the UK Youth Parliament, you can get involved by petitioning, debating and speaking up about the things that matter to you.

What issues are important to you? How will you get involved with your UK Parliament?

Write your ideas here: _____

war and conflict

fairness

people who don't have a home

the environment

animal welfare

what should happen at school

health and food

See Parliament in action!

Anyone can visit the UK Parliament. You can watch a debate and take a tour of the Palace of Westminster. What would you like to see? Who would you like to meet?

Things to do when I visit the UK Parliament

Places to visit: _____

People I'd like to meet: _____

Questions I'd like to ask: _____



What do I know?



Now you know all about the UK Parliament, here are some fun activities for you to do, either on your own or with your classmates! **Have fun!**

Let's see what you know about Parliament. Can you answer these questions and be a Parliament Quiz Master?



UK PARLIAMENT QUIZ

- 1 What are the three parts of the UK Parliament?
- 2 Who tried to blow up Parliament in 1605?
- 3 What object needs to be in the House of Commons Chamber before debates can take place?
- 4 How do you become an MP?
- 5 How can you contact your MP?
- 6 What do members of the House of Lords do?
- 7 When does parliamentary 'ping-pong' happen?
- 8 How old do you need to be to vote in a general election?
- 9 Who has to sign a Bill to make it into a law?
- 10 How can you watch a debate in Parliament?

WORD PUZZLES

Which events from the history of Parliament can you spell out by rearranging the letters below?

NAAGM RCAAT

EVDILUTOON

GWODUNPER LTOP

YUPTEN BEETADS

Can you find these important people in Parliament in the word search?



WORD SEARCH

P	B	A	R	O	N	E	S	S	T	C	Y	O
Q	R	Y	P	X	C	D	R	U	L	L	K	P
C	A	I	S	S	B	E	C	X	H	E	P	P
S	L	H	M	I	N	I	S	T	E	R	B	O
P	U	O	K	E	O	M	T	E	Q	K	C	S
E	Q	V	R	T	M	E	G	J	C	S	L	I
A	D	W	K	D	P	I	Q	B	M	U	J	T
K	B	G	O	V	E	R	N	M	E	N	T	I
E	O	P	L	B	X	W	R	I	Y	F	G	O
R	M	O	N	A	R	C	H	B	S	V	A	N
A	Z	S	H	L	L	U	P	F	G	T	J	I
M	C	R	O	S	S	B	E	N	C	H	E	R
P	R	E	H	C	N	E	B	K	C	A	B	R

PRIME MINISTER
LORD
BARONESS
SPEAKER
MP
MONARCH
BACKBENCHER
CROSSBENCHER
MINISTER
OPPOSITION
GOVERNMENT
CLERKS

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot 6 differences between the two pictures below?



Glossary

Act of Parliament When a Bill is agreed by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, it is signed by the Monarch. It then becomes an Act of Parliament and part of the UK law.

Bill A Bill is an idea for a new law or a suggestion of how to change a law that we already have. A Bill is debated in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Not all Bills become law.

Cabinet The Cabinet is part of the Government. The Prime Minister chooses people from the governing party to join the Cabinet to run different departments like Education and Health. These people help to make decisions about how to run the UK and can be MPs or members of the House of Lords.

Chamber The House of Commons and the House of Lords both have a Chamber. These are the rooms where they meet, debate and make decisions.

Constituency A constituency is the specific geographical area that is represented by each MP in the House of Commons. People who live in an MP's constituency are known as the constituents.

Debate A debate is a type of discussion where people give their opinions on a topic. Members of the House of Commons and House of Lords debate important issues affecting the UK.

Devolution This is when some powers were transferred from the UK Parliament to the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

General election This is when people cast their votes to decide which MP will represent their constituency in the House of Commons. A general election is usually held every five years.

Government The Government runs the country. The Government is formed by the political party who gains the most votes in a general election.

Opposition The opposition parties sit on the benches opposite the Government in the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

MP (Member of Parliament) An MP is a person elected by the people in a constituency to represent them in the House of Commons.

Peer (member of the House of Lords) A peer is another name for a member of the House of Lords. Most members of the House of Lords are life peers, which means they have been appointed for their lifetime.

Prime Minister The Prime Minister is the leader of the Government. He or she lives and works at 10 Downing Street.

State Opening of Parliament This ceremony marks the start of Parliament's year, which is a bit like a school year. The Monarch visits Parliament and sits on the throne in the House of Lords to read a speech. The speech is written by the Government and sets out its plans for the coming year.

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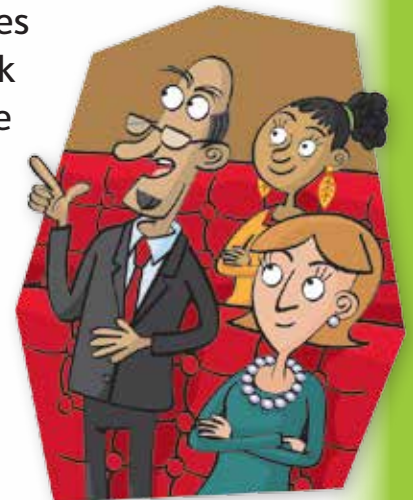


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