Politics Transition Tasks

A Level Politics:

The following booklet outlines the skills and content of the A level Politics course and includes activities which are designed to develop your general political knowledge and understanding in preparation for September.

Work through each of the tasks using the supporting booklet ***'How it works'*** to help.

You need to submit your work to your teacher in your first politics lesson at the start of Y12.

'Man is a political animal' (Aristotle)

Politics will suit students who:

- have an interest in the world around them: who want to know more about the society they live in, how it works and how it could work,
- enjoy debate, discussion and argument: who are comfortable with the fact that in politics there are no simple 'rights' or 'wrongs',
- like to think for themselves: who wants to develop their own views, rather than accept the views of others.
- Politics will be a new subject to the majority of you and therefore you may see it as an opportunity to do something fresh and new, an enriching experience in itself.
- It is particularly important that you have an **enquiring mind**, a desire to learn about how the political system works and its impact on you, the citizen.

"Just because you do not take an interest in politics, doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you." –

attributed to Pericles, 5th century BC

The skills you will develop studying politics:

· **Knowledge and understanding** of basic political ideas , concepts, structures and processes, the relationship between them and how they work at different levels.

· An ability to interpret and **analyse** political information in various forms and from various sources, and to apply a range of political ideas concepts and theories.

· An ability to **evaluate** arguments, theories, values and ideologies to explain political behaviour and suggest solutions to controversial issues.

· The skills to **organise and present an argument with relevance, clarity and coherence using good English.**

Course Outline:

Year 12	**Year 13**
UK Politics: Democracy & participation, political parties, electoral systems, voting behaviour, the media. Core Politics Ideas: Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism. UK Government: The Constitution, Prime Minister & the Executive, relationships between the branches of government. Non-core Political Ideas: (One only of the following) Feminism, Anarchism or Nationalism	Government and Politics of the USA: The US constitution, federalism, US congress, US presidency, US Supreme Court, civil rights, US democracy & participation, comparative theories.
Exam: Paper 1: UK Politics & Core Political Ideas Paper 2: UK Government & Non-Core Political Ideas Paper 3: Comparative Politics (USA)	

How will you be successful on this course?

It is essential you take an interest in current affairs and political issues.

This will involve:

- Reading a QUALITY newspaper (such as The Times, Guardian, Telegraph or their Sunday equivalent; magazines and specific politics journals such as **Politics Review,** as well as the core textbooks.
- Watching current affairs programmes such as Panorama, Despatches, Newsnight, Question Time and specific politics programmes such as 'A Week in Politics'.
- Watching the news or listening to *Today* on Radio 4.
- Discussing and debating political issues with both fellow politics students and others
- Keeping a scrapbook of press cuttings on politics and issues

But interest alone is not enough!

You will be given a variety of tasks:

The work will be hard and challenging. If you don't do independent reading & research you WILL be left behind.

The jump from GCSE to A level is probably bigger than from A level to undergraduate.

Reading
Research
Stimulus response questions
Essays

Summer Activities in Preparation for A level Politics:

You will need to download the following booklet:
https://assets-learning.parliament.uk/uploads/2019/12/How-it-Works-booklet.pdf

Read through the booklet and complete the following activities:

Task 1: In your own words write a short definition for each of these keywords/ phrases:

Keyword/ phrase	Definition
Politics	
Suffrage	
Political Participation	
Democracy	
Direct Democracy	
Representative Democracy	
Member of Parliament (MP)	
General Election	
Devolution	
Devolved Assemblies/ Parliament	
By-election	
Referendum	
Manifesto	
First-Past-The-Post (FPTP)	
Constitution	

Uncodified Constitution	
Parliamentary sovereignty	
Legislature	
Executive	
Judiciary	

Role of Parliament	
Parliamentary Reform Acts 1911 and 1949	
Human Rights Act 1998	
Constitutional Reform Act 2005	
Fixed Term Parliament Act 2011	
Bicameral legislature	
House of Commons	
Constituency	
Frontbencher minister	
Backbench MP	
The Speaker	
The Opposition	
House of Lords	
Crossbencher	

Life Peer	
Hereditary Peer	
Select Committee	
Legislative Committee	
Government Bills	
Private Members Bills	
Political Party	
Party Whips	
Party Rebel	
Coalition government	
Partisan	
Partisan	
Dealignment	
Pressure Group	
Sectional Pressure Group	
Causal Pressure Group	
Insider Pressure Group	
Outsider Pressure Group	
Lobbying	
Petition	

Task 2: Investigate the role of an MP.

a.) Research your local MP, who is he/she; which party do they represent; which constituency do they represent; what have they recently shown an interest in; research their voting history to see where they stand on key issues.
https://members.parliament.uk/

b.) Investigate the role of an MP by playing the game in the link below.
https://learning.parliament.uk/resources/mp-for-a-week/#cta-target

Findings:

a.) My local MP
b.) The role of an MP

<u>Task 3:</u> Watch / read / follow the news over the summer holidays.

Create a 10 question quiz on current political events to test the rest of the class when you come back:

Questions:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

<u>Task 4:</u> Research one pressure group that currently exists in the UK.

- Who are they?
- What type of group are they? (causal, sectional, insider, outsider) What are they campaigning for and why?
- What methods have they used to campaign?
- Do you think they have been successful so far?

Example Pressure Group:

<u>Task 5:</u> In the taster lesson we discussed whether 16 year olds should be allowed to vote in UK general elections.

Read the source below and answer the questions:

In the UK, the minimum voting age is 18, except in Scotland, where 16- and 17-year-olds have been given the right to vote in local and Scottish parliamentary elections. By and large, 16-year-olds haven't yet entered the world of home ownership, employment, tax or pensions but these economic issues are often at the forefront of election campaigns. The main argument against lowering the voting age is that a lack of experience in these matters prevents young people from making a considered judgement at the ballot box.

Opponents also point to the fact that 18- to 24-year-olds have the lowest turnout of any age group in elections, reflecting an apparent lack of interest in politics. These critics question whether an even younger generation would be any different. And there are concerns that teenagers who do want to cast their votes would be impressionable and easily influenced by radical politics, or would not fully think things through and would blindly vote for the same party as their parents.

But calls to lower the voting age come from a range of sources – adults as well as teenagers themselves, backed up by youth organisations, pressure groups and politicians. 16 and 17 year olds in the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey, Brazil and Austria already have the vote. They can also vote in some elections in Germany, Malta and Norway. Evidence from the Scottish independence referendum, substantiated by research from Austria and Norway, shows – aided by the encouragement of families and schools – 16 and 17 year-olds have higher rates of turnout than 18 to 24 year-olds.

For supporters, it's about giving young people a say in matters that directly affect them, such as tuition fees. It's also thought that lowering the limit will encourage civic-mindedness at an earlier age and establish an interest in the political system, which will be continued throughout a person's life. Scotland's positive experience of including 16- and 17-year- olds in the 2014 independence referendum led to the lowering of the voting age for local and Holyrood elections.

A study by the University of Edinburgh during the referendum found that some teenagers were initially doubtful of their own abilities to make the right decision, but that this led them to actively seek out information to help inform their judgement. In some cases, teenagers even influenced their parents' voting intentions with their new-found knowledge.

But as there are no immediate plans for the UK government to debate lowering the voting age for general elections, it is unlikely that all 16-year-olds will get the chance to put that to the test any time soon.

Sources: http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zsbtbk7 and https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/ campaigns/votes-at-16/

1. Define the following political and non-political words from the source.

Parliamentary elections	
Forefront	
Ballot box	
Turnout	
Impressionable	
Radical politics	
Blindly	
Pressure groups	
Substantiated	
Tuition fees	
Civic-mindedness	
Referendum	
Holyrood	
Voting intentions	

2. Using two differently coloured highlighters, indicate:

a.) The arguments in the source that support the view that 16 to 18 year olds should be given the vote

b.) The arguments in the source that support the view that the voting age should remain at 18

3. Match up 3 arguments that support the view that 16 to18 year olds should be given the vote with 3 counter-arguments that support the view that they should not.

Arguments that support the view that 16 to 18 year olds should get the vote.	Counter-arguments that support the view that the voting age should remain at 18

4. You are now going to practice **analysing** one of these arguments. You are going to use **evidence** to back-up your analysis. You may need to do some additional research to answer these questions.

The source states that **the 18-24 age group has the lowest turnout in UK elections so therefore even younger voters are likely to have an even lower turnout.**	
What is turnout?	
For example, what was the turnout for 18-24 year olds in the recent 2019 general election?	
How does this compare with turnout for this age group in the 2017 and 2015 general elections?	
Why therefore is it perhaps not a good idea to extend the vote to 16 and 17 year olds?	
In the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum (the first UK election to give 16 year olds the vote) what was the turnout for 16-18 years old? Which age group had the lowest turnout in this referendum?	
Therefore, how does this argument prove that the voting age should not be reduced to 16 years old?	

5. The work you have just done is how you would start to answer the A Level exam question below:

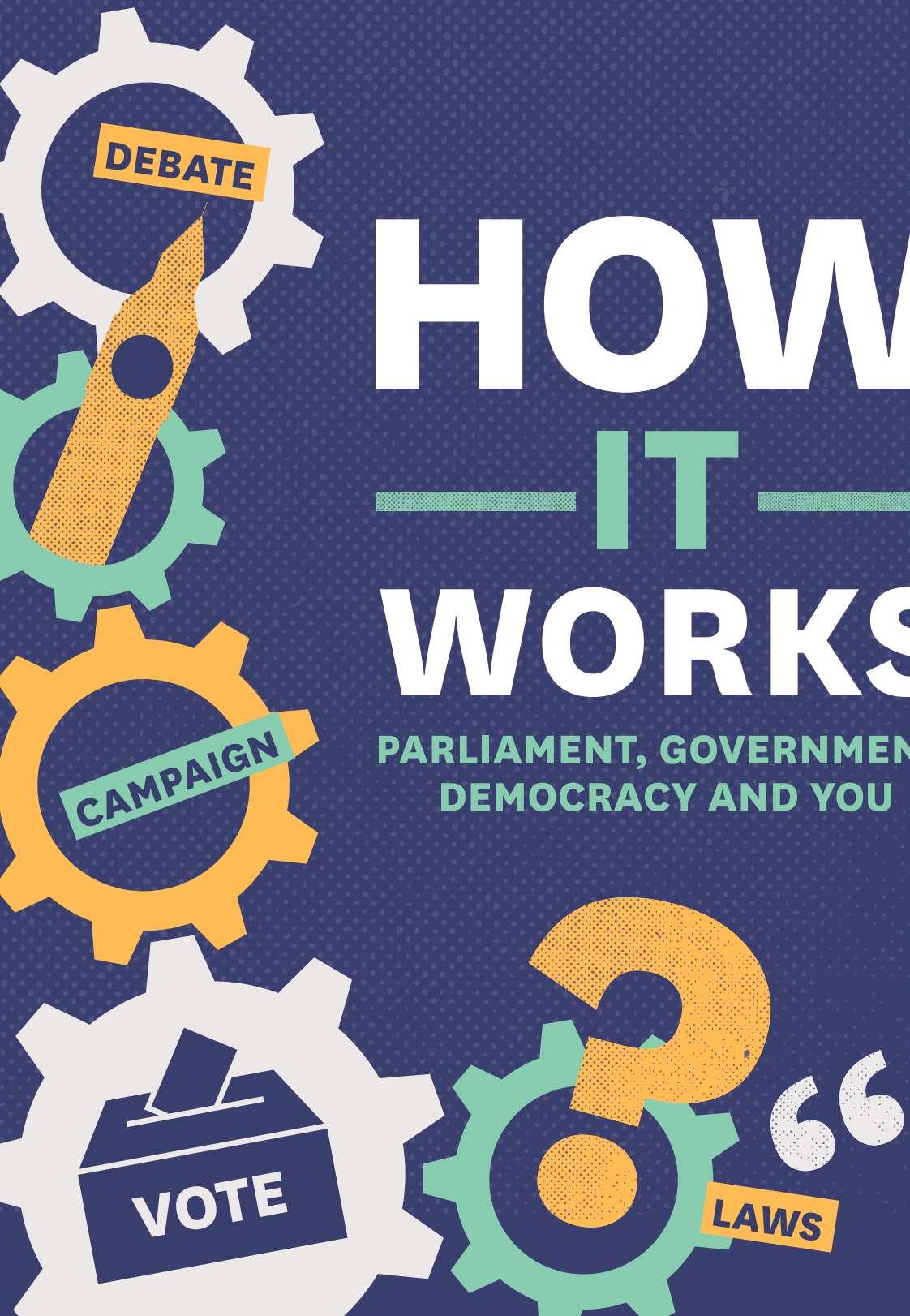
'Using the source, evaluate the view that the voting age should be lowered to 16 for UK general elections.'

Don't worry you are not going to have to write a full answer to this question: you are just going to have a go at writing a conclusion to this question using the AS IF approach.

A	Answer (what is your decision should 16 years olds get the vote?)	
S	Substantiate your view	
I	It Depends on…	
F	Future Prospects	

(Resources for this task are taken from tutor2u booklet 'From the source- Votes at 16)

UK Parliament



HOW IT WORKS

PARLIAMENT, GOVERNMENT, DEMOCRACY AND YOU

HOW IT WORKS

Parliament plays a role in almost all aspects of our lives: from the laws which govern us and the services we use, to the position of the UK in the world.

This is a guide to the people and processes through which Parliament works, as well as some of the history which led to the UK Parliament as it stands today.

Whether you are studying for a qualification or simply seeking more information, this guide is for you.

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22. Political Parties

24. Campaigning

26. Get Involved

THE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

Democracy in the UK has a long and complex history; here are a few dates to get you started.

1215

In England, the first step towards forging a democracy came in 1215 with the Magna Carta, which limited the king's power over the Church and nobility.

1265

Simon de Montfort led a rebellion against Henry III – and briefly captured him. He then called a Parliament for support and consultation. For the first time, representatives of towns and counties across England were consulted along with the barons.

1430

The 40-shilling franchise was established to determine who had the right to vote – this remained unchanged for the next 400 years. It meant that everyone who owned or rented land with an income of 40 shillings or more could vote in county elections.

1689

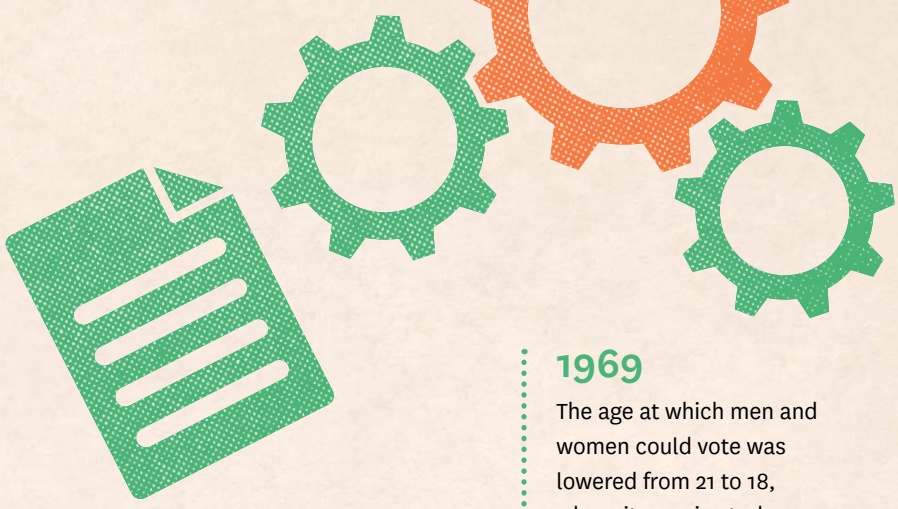
The Bill of Rights was created, which outlined many of the basic principles of Parliament which are still in force today, such as Parliament's role in approving taxation and the right to petition.

1832

The Reform Act was the first to make representation fairer and simpler by reworking constituency boundaries and extending the franchise to include one in seven men.

1838

The People's Charter was published by William Lovett, calling for dramatic changes to suffrage and elections in the UK, as well as the role of MPs. This began the Chartist movement which presented several mass petitions to Parliament over the next 10 years – the legacy of which influenced further reforms in 1867 and 1884.



1866

The MP John Stuart Mill presented the first mass petition about women's suffrage to Parliament, which marked the start of organised campaigning for women's right to vote. Bills and petitions in favour of votes for women were presented almost annually from this point, though women were not granted any voting rights until 1918.

1889

Thomas Hansard began publishing transcripts of parliamentary debates in 1812, and in 1889 the Commons began to pay for Hansard to be produced as a permanent record of proceedings. All debates are still recorded, printed and published online.

1918

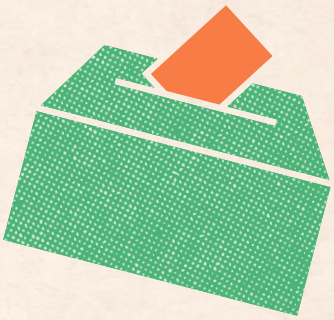
The Representation of the People Act led to a huge increase in the number of people eligible to vote. For the first time since 1832, eligible women could vote, and all men over the age of 21 (18, if serving in the armed forces) were granted suffrage.

1928

The Equal Franchise Act finally allowed men and women to vote on the same terms.

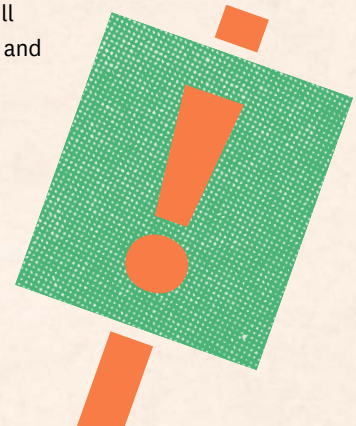
1969

The age at which men and women could vote was lowered from 21 to 18, where it remains today.



1997

Referendums were held in Scotland and Wales for devolved administrations to be set up. These resulted in the inception of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. In 1998, referendums were held across Ireland to approve the Good Friday Agreement, which created the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive.



DEMOCRACY

The people who govern a country make decisions about how society is organised – decisions that affect everyone. In the UK, we elect the people who govern us. We also elect people to question the government and hold them to account on our behalf in Parliament. This is called representative, or parliamentary, democracy.

POLITICS The activities associated with the governance of a country or area.

SUFFRAGE The right to vote in political elections.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION Taking action which will affect the political situation: this could take many forms – voting, joining a party or campaigning.

PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY

Abraham Lincoln described democracy as 'government of the people, by the people, for the people.' Literally, the word 'democracy' means 'rule by the people', originating with the Greek words 'demos' (people) and 'kratia' (rule by). Types of government that aren't democratic rely on other things to make them legitimate: examples include governments run by a religious elite (theocracy), or those who rule by sheer force (military dictatorship).

The UK is a democracy because the government's power is based on popular support. But democracies do not all look alike. For this reason, the UK is usually described as a 'western liberal democracy'.

Liberal democracies depend on:

1. **Checks and balances** – these prevent one person or group being too powerful.
2. **Freedom of speech and association** – different views can be aired, and political parties or groups can form and compete openly.
3. **Free and fair elections** – people can vote for who they want and can trust the outcome of elections.
4. **Transparency and openness** – people know who is responsible for decisions and can hold them to account.
5. **Active participation by the public** – elected representatives are kept in touch with the people they represent.

TYPES OF DEMOCRACY

DIRECT: Direct democracy originated in ancient Athens, where residents classed as 'citizens' would gather to debate and make decisions on issues of public importance. It involves the citizens having the power to make decisions as a group for themselves, rather than through a group of elected representatives. Modern examples of direct democracy exist in Swiss cantons and some towns in the USA.

REPRESENTATIVE: In a representative democracy, citizens choose representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Representative democracies can be found all over the world, in both presidential and parliamentary systems of government. In the UK, the House of Commons uses representative democracy to select its members.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UK system of democracy?

YOU CAN REGISTER TO VOTE IN UK PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS FROM AGE **16**

AND VOTE WHEN YOU TURN... **18**

Go to gov.uk to find out more

THEORIES OF REPRESENTATION

In a representative system like the UK, there are different ways the role of democratic representatives can be viewed.

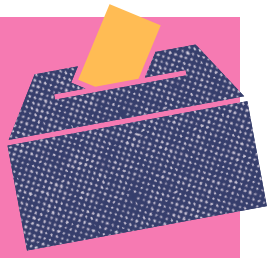
DELEGATE THEORY: In the delegate theory, the representatives have a duty to represent the views of the people who elected them, with little capacity to use their personal judgement or beliefs. This would suggest it is an MP's duty to find out what the electorate thinks, and do what the people want them to do.

MANDATE THEORY: This theory suggests that people and groups who are elected should carry out the plans in the manifesto they were elected upon. This is based on the principle that people vote for ideas, rather than for individuals. MPs therefore only have a 'mandate' to do the things they said they would do upon election.

BURKEAN THEORY: Edmund Burke believed that it is the responsibility of elected representatives to use their judgement to do what is best for the people, rather than doing what the people want. This assumes that the representatives will have knowledge and experience to allow them to behave independently in the interests of the electorate.

What issues could the co-existence of these theories contribute to?

ELECTIONS AND VOTING



Local councillors, MPs and other public figures, such as mayors, all represent you and your interests. If you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, you will also be represented within the devolved bodies which govern significant elements of your lives in these places.

VOTING IN THE UK

Voting in elections gives you the chance to have a say on who represents you locally, regionally and nationally. But the systems through which these representatives are chosen can vary, which can affect election outcomes.

GENERAL ELECTIONS: General elections are held at least every five years in the UK to elect members of the House of Commons (MPs) from constituencies around the country. After a general election, the leader of the party with the most MPs becomes Prime Minister and forms the government. General elections in the UK use the First Past the Post electoral system.

DEVOLVED ASSEMBLY/PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS:
In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, elections are usually held every five years to choose the members of the devolved bodies. Scotland and Wales use the Additional Member System, while Northern Ireland uses the Single Transferable Vote system.

LOCAL ELECTIONS: Every four years each local council holds elections for councillors, police and crime commissioners and, in some cases, a mayor to lead the council – though not all mayors are elected. In England and Wales, these elections use the First Past the Post System; Northern Ireland and Scotland use the Single Transferable Vote system.

BY-ELECTIONS: By-elections take place when there is a need to fill vacancies which arise when an elected representative steps down, is disqualified or passes away while in office.

REFERENDUMS: Referendums are usually held to measure the opinion of the public on a single issue. They usually ask people to choose between two options, and every vote counts towards the overall result, rather than being counted by constituency.

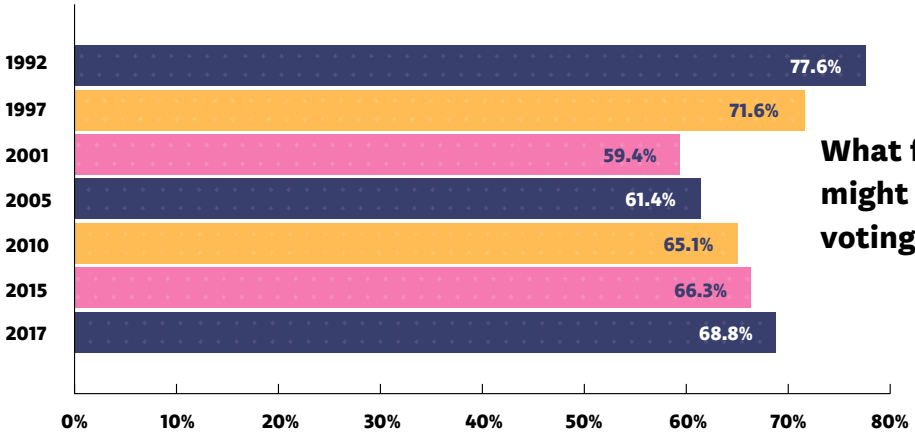
MAJORITARIAN electoral systems designed to serve the majority.

PROPORTIONAL electoral systems designed to reflect the diversity of the population.

MANIFESTO A declaration of intentions published by political parties in the lead up to an election.

TURNOUT IN GENERAL ELECTIONS

Between 1922 and 1997, turnout in UK general elections was almost always 70% and 80%.
This graph shows how voter turnout trends have changed since 1992



What factors might impact voting behaviour?

TYPES OF VOTING SYSTEMS

Type of System	Strengths	Limitations
First Past the Post (FPTP) This system is used during **general elections** and some other ballots in the UK. Each voter can cast one local vote, and the candidate with the most votes becomes the MP or councillor. Historically it usually produces single party governments.	Simple for voters to understand – one person, one vote.	Election results are not proportional to votes cast overall and small parties and minority groups can be under-represented.
Supplementary Vote Used in **mayoral elections,** voters indicate first and second preferences. If no single candidate wins a majority, the two candidates with the highest number of votes are retained, the other candidates are eliminated, and second choice candidates are counted to choose the winner. This is likely to lead to majority governments.	Avoids multiple counts and redistribution, as only two choices are recorded.	Parties may not be rewarded for the share of the votes they gain.
Closed List System (CLS) Used in **European** parliamentary elections, this system requires voters to choose a party of their choice, while parties present lists of candidates to be allocated according to their share of the vote. This system is likely to produce coalitions.	Often leads to better representation for smaller parties and minority groups, as a strong connection is retained between votes won and seats gained.	There may be no clear link between the MP and the constituency. It is a complicated system to administer.
Single Transferable Vote (STV) Used for local and devolved elections in **Northern Ireland**. In each area, a number of seats are available, and voters choose a range of candidates in order of preference. Seats are allocated as soon as a candidate reaches a 'quota' (specific number) of the votes, and votes can be reallocated to reduce 'wasted' votes.	Produces a strong connection between votes won and seats gained.	As with CLS, there may be no clear link between the MP and the constituency. It is a complicated system to administer.
Additional Member System (AMS) Voters in elections for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Senedd have two votes – one to elect a member for their local constituency and one to indicate their choice of party. This is a hybrid system: the constituency votes are counted using the FPTP system, and the second is used to select regional members proportionally. It can make coalitions more likely.	Often leads to fairer representation for smaller parties and minority groups.	Results are not as proportional to the votes cast as in systems such as STV.

REFERENDUMS

Referendums are ballots in which people are usually given a two-way choice on a specific issue. In the UK referendums tend to be used only to decide on important, constitutional matters, such as the 2014 referendum in Scotland about leaving the UK.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Referendums can sometimes encourage a high level of voter participation.	Some argue that there should be a required turnout and size of majority for a referendum result to affect change. Where a result is close or turnout has not been high, the outcome has been questioned.
They can offer a constitutional check on the government, so major changes can only be made with support from the public.	Referendums can create significant divisions in public opinion which may lead to political and economic instability.
Unlike elections, they can provide a direct answer to a specific question.	The referendum issue might be simplified in the process of creating a two-way question.
They are sometimes useful when the issue divides parties.	The funding of campaigns can affect the turnout and the result of referendums, as can the input of the media. It has proved difficult to enforce legal campaign spending limits.
Referendums can stimulate public engagement with government policy, and may encourage people to educate themselves about specific issues more deeply.	In the UK, there are no set rules about when referendums need to be held and whether the outcome is binding, so action to be taken after the vote can be uncertain.

CASE STUDY: 2016 EU REFERENDUM

On the 23rd June 2016, the Government of the UK called a referendum asking the question: 'Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the EU or leave the EU?'

The UK joined the European Communities, which later became the European Union, in 1972. The group was initially formed to remove trade barriers and reduce potential for war within Europe. A referendum was held to confirm this decision in 1975, in which 67% voted to remain part of the group.

However, the issue of the UK's membership of the European Union continued to be discussed. Some groups believed that the UK gave up too much power and sovereignty by being part of the EU.

VOTE LEAVE

Main Campaigning Issues:

- Returning full legislative powers to the UK Parliament.
- Allowing the UK to control trade tariffs and immigration.
- Freedom to spend funds sent to the EU in our own way.

BRITAIN STRONGER IN EUROPE

Main Campaigning Issues:

- Economic security created by free trade within the EU.
- The benefits of EU legislation such as laws around worker's rights.
- The benefits to security and global influence.

TURNOUT
72%
33,551,983 VOTES

LEAVE
51.89%
OF THE VOTE

REMAIN
48.11%
OF THE VOTE

COMPARISON: 2011 ALTERNATIVE VOTE (AV) REFERENDUM

A referendum was held in the UK in 2011 to decide between retaining First Past the Post or moving to the Alternative Vote electoral system. In contrast, this referendum had lower turnout and there was a wider margin between the results.

It has been suggested that one reason for this was that the complexity of the Alternative Vote system, compared to First Past the Post, made gaining popular support challenging. It has also been argued that while there had been calls to change the electoral system to a proportional alternative, the AV system wasn't considered to fully meet this requirement.

TURNOUT
42%
(19,279,022 VOTES)

YES
32.10%

NO
67.90%

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UK

A constitution contains the rules by which a country is organised, including the specific powers and duties of the government and the rights and responsibilities of all its people.

The UK has an uncodified constitution: its rules have never been written down together in a single legal document and some have not been written down at all.

Supporters of uncodified constitutions would argue that if you try to reduce a nation's entire legal, political, ethical and social rules into a single definitive list, you risk over-simplification. They would also argue that there is a risk of creating a set of sacred rules that cannot be challenged, which may prevent a nation from adapting as times change.

Uncodified constitutions are flexible, but they are also more complex and nuanced. For this reason, decisions about whether something is 'constitutional' in the UK may be referred to the judiciary. The judiciary are independent of the government and can challenge their decisions and actions.

UNCODIFIED An uncodified constitution is one where the rules are in precedent and customs alongside a variety of texts, rather than one written document. In contrast, the USA has a written, or codified, constitution.

PARLIAMENTARY SOVEREIGNTY
The principle that Parliament is the supreme legal authority in the UK; only Parliament can create or end any UK law.

LEGISLATURE (PARLIAMENT)
The body which produces the laws of a country.

EXECUTIVE (GOVERNMENT)
The body which is responsible for governing a country, including enforcing laws.

TIMELINE OF CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS

Magna Carta (1215) – Also known as the 'Great Charter of Freedoms', this document defined the relationship between the Monarch, Church and Nobility, ensuring that the King was accountable to the law. It is often seen as a precursor to Parliament.

Bill of Rights (1689) – The Bill of Rights established principles of regular parliaments and free elections while limiting the role of the Monarch.

The Acts of Union 1706 and 1707 – These acts were passed by the Parliaments of Scotland and England and granted that the countries would be "United into One Kingdom by the Name of Great Britain".

The Reform Bill 1832 – Known as the 'Great Reform Act', this law was the first in 400 years to amend the systems by which MPs were selected. It removed 'rotten boroughs', where very few voters often had the power to select multiple MPs; replaced the constituency boundaries and extended suffrage.

DEVOLUTION

The UK is made up of four countries, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, each with their own history and culture. The balance of power between these countries has often been the subject of fierce debate and has changed from time to time. A major change took place in 1997-1998 when referendums in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, led Parliament to allow those countries to set up their own democratic institutions.

The UK Parliament has reserved its power to make laws in areas considered essential to the union such as international relations, defence and the economy, including taxes and benefits. Decisions over other areas of government including health, education, housing, the environment and transport, have increasingly been 'devolved' or delegated to these bodies who are based nearer to the people their decisions affect.

Devolution in the UK is often used as an example of the flexibility of the UK's constitution which has been able to accommodate this change without it meaning the break-up of the UK.

PARLIAMENT

The main work of Parliament falls into three broad categories:

- Making laws – **legislation.**
- Checking and challenging the work of government – **scrutiny.**
- Representing the view of people across the country – **representation.**

The work of Parliament is separate from the work of government. The government is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the country: Parliament holds them to account and makes laws. It is important to distinguish between the work of Parliament (legislature), and that of the government (executive).

In the UK, these two branches of power are closely linked compared to their relationship within the presidential system in the USA, where the presidential (executive) elections are held independently of those to form the legislature.

Can you think of benefits and disadvantages of devolved bodies?

European Communities Act 1972 – This act allowed the UK to join the European Communities, which later became the European Union. The most significant constitutional effect of this was that the laws of the Communities became binding in the UK, superseding laws passed by the UK Parliament.

Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949 – The two Parliament Acts provided that the House of Lords no longer had powers to block bills, and limited their power to delay them. They also reduced the maximum tenure of a government from 7 to 5 years.

The Scotland Act, Government of Wales Act and Good Friday Agreement (all 1998) – These acts began the process of devolution by setting up the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly, which gave voters in these nations the opportunity to vote for representatives within these bodies.

Life Peerages Act (1958) – The Act paved the way for women and members from different backgrounds and professions to sit in the Lords. Since 1958, most members have been appointed for their lifetime, their titles are not passed on to their children.

Constitutional Reform Act 2005 – This act ended the role of the House of Lords in the judiciary and provided for the Supreme Court to be established instead.

The Human Rights Act 1998 – This law combined the European Convention on Human Rights with UK law.

The Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011 – This set up provision for elections to be held on the first Thursday in May every 5 years, unless requirements are met to hold one sooner.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

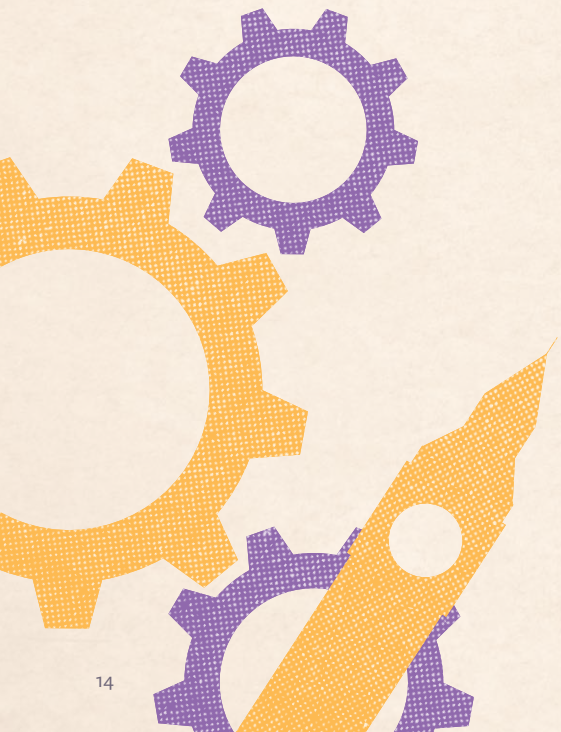
THE TWO-HOUSE SYSTEM

The UK has a bicameral legislature, which means that the business of Parliament takes place across two Chambers – The House of Commons and the House of Lords. Both Houses make laws, check and challenge government and represent views.

The House of Commons is the elected part of Parliament. It is also responsible for funding government departments by passing laws which allow for the collection of taxes.

ROLES OF MPS

MPs are qualified to sit in the Commons because they have been elected; that qualification expires at the end of each Parliament, every 5 years. Because only the House of Commons is elected, the constitution limits the power of the House of Lords so that it cannot override decisions made by MPs, and the Commons alone makes decisions about how much tax people have to pay.



1. Representation

MPs represent their constituents: all the people who live in their constituency, including those who didn't or couldn't vote for them. They also represent a range of knowledge, backgrounds and political parties. They split their time between working in Parliament itself and working in their constituency.

2. Scrutiny

The government is accountable to Parliament and to the public and in the House of Commons, MPs can hold the government to account in several ways. Prime Minister's Questions and Ministerial Questions offer the opportunity to check and challenge the government's policies, while Urgent Questions can be put forward on a daily basis in response to current affairs. There are also opportunities for the opposition and backbench MPs to put forward topics for debates, which can be useful opportunities for scrutiny.

3. Debate

There is time within Parliament's calendar for MPs to debate issues arising for the country. Important occasions will often be marked by debates in Parliament, and time is also allocated for the Opposition parties to debate issues of their choosing.

Ministers

Ministers are the MPs who are in the government. They are appointed by the Prime Minister and each given a specific area of government policy to oversee. Ministers speak on behalf of the government from the frontbenches during parliamentary debates and must answer questions put to them by other MPs.

Opposition Benches

Includes the political parties other than the governing party or parties. They are called the opposition because they sit on the benches opposite the government.

Speaker

The Speaker is an MP who has been elected by other MPs to act as Chair during debates in the House of Commons. They are responsible for ensuring that the rules are observed and order is maintained in the Chamber.

Government Benches

The national government of the UK has responsibility for developing and implementing policy, and for drafting laws. It is also known as the Executive. Government members sit on the benches to the right of the Speaker.

Backbenchers

MPs who are neither government ministers nor opposition shadow spokespeople. They are so called because, in the Chamber, they sit in the rows of benches behind their parties' spokespeople who are known as frontbenchers. Backbenchers play important roles during debates in scrutinising ministers through questions.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS

The House of Lords is one of two Houses of Parliament and provides a second opinion to the House of Commons and the government. The Lords and the Commons share the tasks of making laws, holding government to account, and debating the issues of the day. The three main roles of the House of Lords are making laws, checking and challenging the work of the government and investigating public policy.

Government

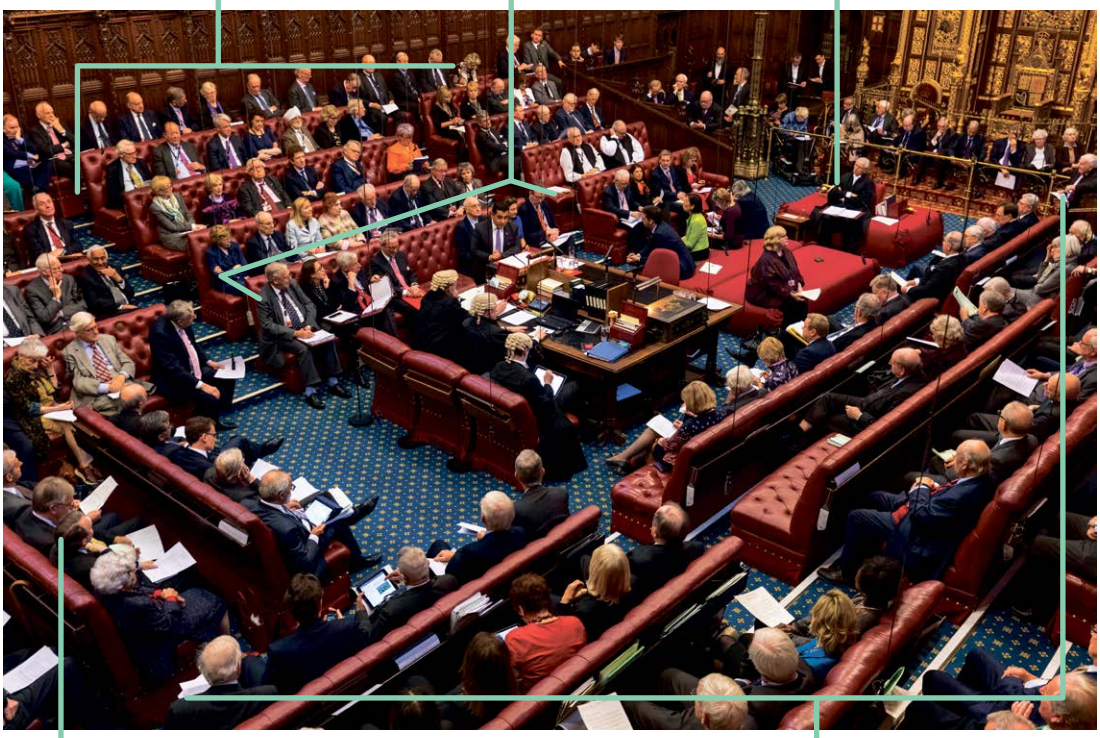
These benches are made up of members who represent the governing party or parties.

Government Front Bench

This is where ministers and government spokespeople sit.

Lord Speaker

The Lord Speaker chairs business in the chamber, is elected by members and is politically impartial. The House is self-regulating, all its members are responsible for ensuring the rules are followed: the Lord Speaker cannot call members to order, decide who speaks next or select which amendments are debated.



Crossbenchers

Crossbench members are independent of the main political parties.

Opposition

Members from the main Opposition party and other parties sit on the benches opposite the government.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS

Members of the Lords have professional experience and expertise in their fields. They put this knowledge to good use when looking at issues in the Chamber or in committee work.

The House of Lords is presently formed of:

Life Peers: Most members (about 650) are appointed for their lifetime by the monarch on the advice of the Prime Minister. Their titles are not passed on to their children.

Life peers bring knowledge, expertise and experience, usually formed through their careers. They represent a wide range of professions – in politics, medicine, law, business, the arts, science, sports, education, the armed forces, diplomacy and public service.

Any British, Irish or Commonwealth citizen who is a UK resident and taxpayer over 21 is eligible to be nominated or can apply to become a member, via the independent House of Lords Appointments Commission.

Archbishops and bishops: 26 Church of England archbishops and bishops are also members of the House of Lords.

Elected hereditary members: The 1999 House of Lords Act ended the right of most hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords. Ninety-two seats for hereditary peers were retained.

Because the House of Lords is appointed rather than elected, it challenges the House of Commons and often asks it to think again on new laws, but it gives the Commons the final say.

BENEFITS OF A SECOND CHAMBER

Different procedures

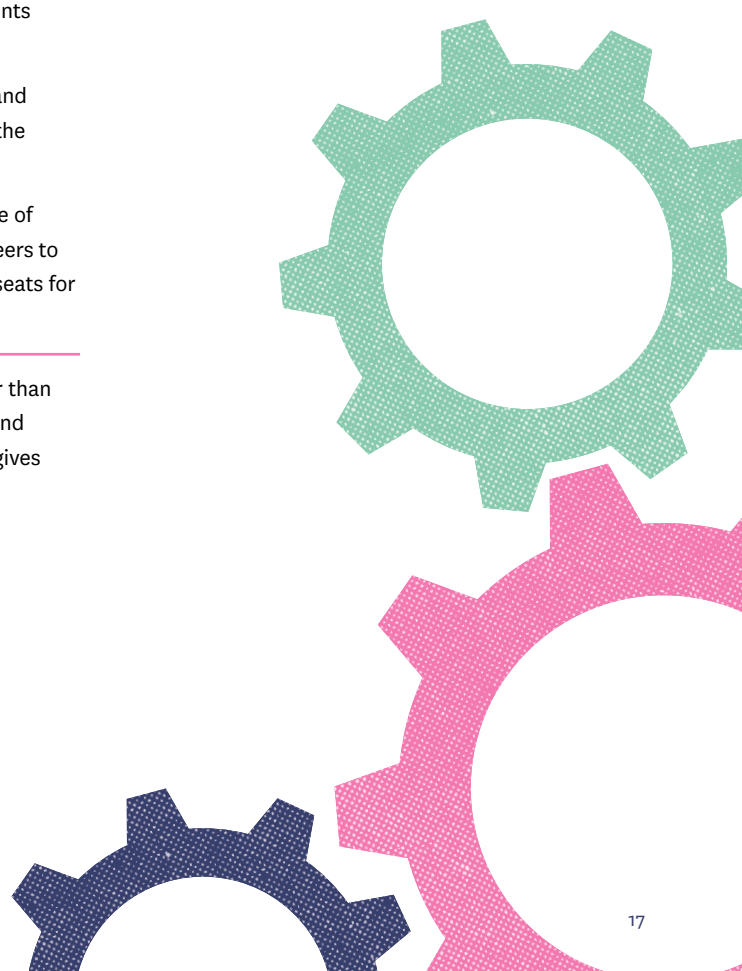
There are no time limits for considering bills and amendments, or rules as to who can participate.

Different composition

There is no government majority and membership includes a large crossbench (independent) group.

Different approach

The House of Lords is independent and able to challenge the Commons, and is more inclined to cross-party collaboration because of the lack of a government majority and the more relaxed party discipline.



COMMITTEES

Committees are smaller groups of members of Parliament who meet to work on a specific task. They are used by both Houses for work that requires a special focus, detailed scrutiny or a cross-party approach. Each House has its own separate structure of committees but for some tasks, members of both Houses combine to form a joint committee. At the end of each task or inquiry, committees are required to report their findings back to Parliament.

Parliamentary committees fall into two general categories: legislative committees (used in the Commons only) and select committees.

SELECT COMMITTEES

Select Committees in the House of Commons conduct inquiries, examining the spending, administration and policy of government departments. In the House of Lords they cover broader issues which cut across government departments.

They are made up of backbenchers and consist of between 8-15 members. They are characterised by cross-party working, and cooperation which is encouraged by the aim of reaching a consensus on any final recommendations.

Select Committees gather evidence from individuals and organisations and can ask to see government documents and data. At the end of each inquiry, a committee publishes its conclusions and usually recommends changes they wish the government to make. The government is required to publish a response to these recommendations within two months.

There is a House of Commons select committee to mirror each government department. These are set up for the duration of a five-year Parliament and they can choose to investigate any matter that falls within their scope during that time. Commons select committees approximately reflect the party balance of the House of Commons.

House of Lords select committees focus on broad, longer-term issues taking advantage of the experience and continuity of the members. A member's appointment to a committee is often based on expertise in that field. The Lords also holds inquiries into specific issues such as intergenerational fairness or climate change.

Joint select committees consist of both MPs and Lords and have similar powers to Commons or Lords select committees. Some are permanent, like the Joint Committee on Human Rights, and others deal with specific issues.

THE COMMONS LIAISON COMMITTEE IS MADE UP OF THE CHAIRS OF EACH OF THE SELECT COMMITTEES. ONE OF ITS ROLES IS TO QUESTION THE PRIME MINISTER ON MATTERS OF PUBLIC POLICY, WHICH IT USUALLY DOES

3 TIMES A YEAR.

CASE STUDIES

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee looks at the environmental impact of policy across all government departments. In 2016, they published a report into the environmental impact of microplastics, and recommended that the government move to introduce a ban on their use in personal care products. This was accepted by the government, and the ban on microplastics came into effect in January 2018.

The House of Lords Intergenerational Fairness Committee published a wide-ranging report in 2019 highlighting the risk that, although intergenerational bonds are still strong, they could be undermined by key issues such as access to housing, secure employment and fairness in tax and benefits. Recommendations included boosting vocational training and protecting young people in work.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

Legislative Committees are set up to look at pieces of legislation in detail – this is known as the 'committee stage' of a bill. They are used widely in the Commons, where most bills are considered for a period by a Public Bill Committee as part of their progress through the House, and almost all other types of legislation are only debated in committee. These committees vary in size – from around 15 to 50 MPs.

Legislative Committees can invite the public to send in their views on a bill and can ask officials and experts from outside Parliament to attend and answer questions. Committees are set up temporarily to look at a single bill, and once finished, it reports its conclusions and any amendments to the House of Commons or Lords. Members then debate the bill again in the 'report stage' in the main Chamber, where further amendments can be made.

Committees that deal exclusively with legislation in the House of Lords are few in number because the House of Lords usually deal with legislation in the main Lords Chamber.

LEGISLATION

Making laws is one of the main functions of UK Parliament: a bill is a proposal for a new law, or a proposal to change an existing law. New laws may be needed due to:

- **Emergency issues**
- **Pressure on the government to update old laws**
- **Changes to case law in courts**

Find out more about the Committee Stage on page 19

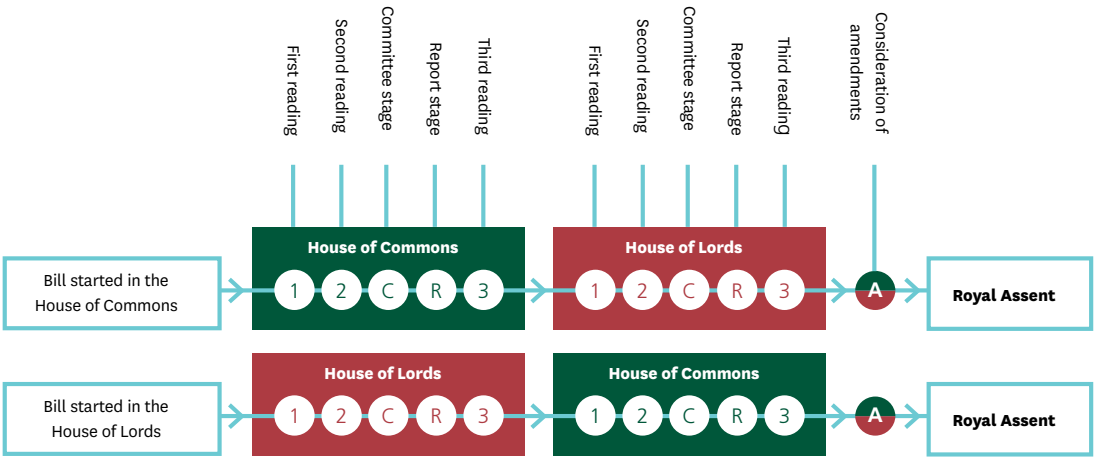
There are two types of Public bill:

1. **Government bills: these are introduced by government ministers. These take priority in Parliament because they are backed by government.**
2. **Private Members' bills: these are introduced by MPs or members of the House of Lords who are not Government Ministers.**

PASSAGE OF A BILL THROUGH PARLIAMENT

Bills can start in either the House of Commons or the House of Lords. When both Houses have agreed on the content of a bill it is then presented to the reigning monarch for approval (known as Royal Assent).

1. **FIRST READING**
2. **SECOND READING**
3. **COMMITTEE STAGE**
4. **REPORT STAGE**
5. **THIRD READING**
6. **AMENDMENTS/PING PONG**



ENGLISH VOTES FOR ENGLISH LAWS

The House of Commons has a system to ensure that legislation which will only affect certain areas only requires backing from a majority of MPs from these areas in order to pass. The Speaker has the authority to decide whether a Bill should go through this process, known as 'EVEL', based on these two conditions:

1. **The legislation will only affect England, or England and Wales.**
2. **It is about something which a devolved body could also legislate about.**

10 Law-Making Terms

1. **Amendment** Change to a bill proposed by MPs or members of the House of Lords.
2. **Division** Used for counting those in favour or against a motion when there is a vote in the House of Lords or Commons. Members go through one of two lobbies on either side of the Chamber where they are counted and their names are recorded.
3. **Filibuster** The practice of speaking in a debate for a long time or raising unnecessary procedural points to deliberately waste time. In this way a bill or a motion may be stopped from making progress within the time allowed.
4. **Free Vote** When MPs or members of the Lords are not put under pressure to vote a certain way by their party leaders. Free votes have traditionally been allowed on ethical issues that are seen as a matter of conscience.
5. **Green Paper** A consultation document produced by a government department. The aim of this document is to allow people both inside and outside Parliament to give the department feedback on its policy or legislative proposals.
6. **Motion** A proposal for action put forward for debate or decision in the House of Commons or House of Lords.
7. **Ping-Pong** The to and fro of amendments to bills between the House of Commons and the House of Lords.
8. **Tellers** The members who count the votes in the House of Commons or House of Lords when there is a division and report the result back to the House.
9. **Wash-Up** The last few days of a Parliament before a general election. All unfinished business must be dealt with swiftly, so the government seeks co-operation from the opposition in dealing with legislation that is still in progress.
10. **White Paper** A document produced by the government proposing details of future legislation. A White Paper often becomes the basis for a bill.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties, and the competition and debate between them, are an important part of the democratic process. All political parties are based on key ideas and principles that members feel are particularly important such as creating a fairer society, giving people greater opportunities and protecting the environment. Political parties sometimes share certain aims, but they tend to differ on how those aims are best achieved.

Political parties have several key functions:

- To enable people with similar views about how the country should be run to come together and campaign for change.
- To structure the choices available to voters in elections, making it easier for citizens to compare candidates based on their party policies.
- To provide a strong source of opposition to the government by giving parties who are not in power the tools to scrutinise and question the parties which are.

Choice for voters

Around eight political parties are usually represented in the House of Commons. Some parties campaign on broad principles, such as the Conservative and Labour parties; some parties have a specific national or local focus, such as Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales) and the Scottish National Party; and other parties have a campaign focus, such as the Green Party.

Traditionally, single parties hope to gain a majority in the House of Commons through a general election so they can form a government without having to co-operate with a different party. However, smaller parties also play an important role, raising issues which other parties may neglect.

Not all MPs are affiliated with political parties, though it can be more difficult to gain recognition in a constituency without one. Independent MPs sit in the opposition benches.

Models of voting behaviour are theories about why people vote the way they do. These can be useful in helping to explain voting patterns, but can often be simplistic.

Sociological

This model states social class is the biggest indicator as to which party a person would vote for.

Rational Choice

This theory proposes that voters can accurately assess which choice will benefit them in order to make a rational decision about who to vote for.

Party ID

This model suggests that voter's choices are defined by their allegiance to political parties.

WHIPS

MPs or members of the House of Lords who are appointed by each political party to inform and organise their own members in Parliament. One of their responsibilities is to make sure that their members vote in divisions, in line with party policy.

PARTY REBEL

Sometimes MPs disagree with their party's view and will vote against it – this is known as 'voting against the whip'.

COALITION GOVERNMENT

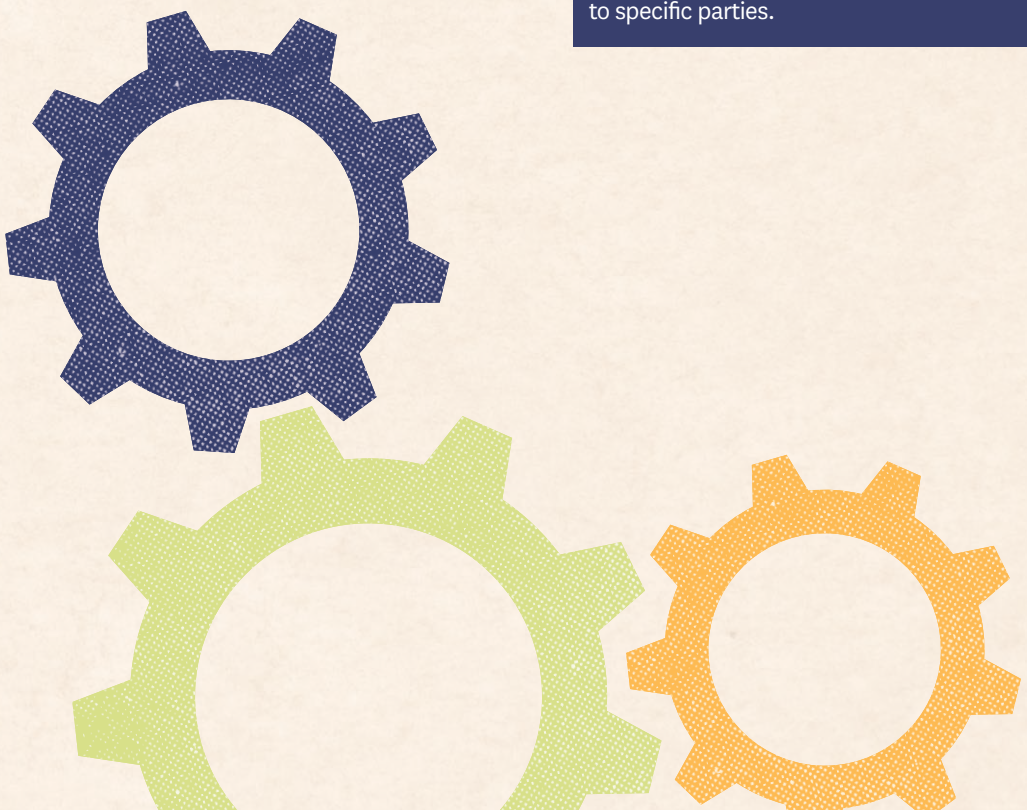
A government formed jointly by more than one political party. Parties may decide to form a coalition government if there is a hung Parliament where no single party has a clear working majority in the House of Commons following a General Election.

PARTISAN

Being committed to a party or group.

PARTISAN DEALIGNMENT

When individuals become less committed to specific parties.



CAMPAIGNING

Campaigns seek to influence the activities of the government and public policy. They can be started by individuals or groups known as pressure groups. Effective campaigns usually focus on one specific issue.

PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure groups generally fall into two categories: those who campaign on one issue (known as **causal** groups), and those who campaign on a range of issues linked to a theme (known as **sectional** groups). Pressure groups sometimes provide the government with information and assist with inquiries related to their area of interest.

It can be difficult for individuals on their own to influence policy and political decisions. A group of like-minded people working together can have more impact and be more successful in getting their concerns heard by both the government and the general public. Pressure groups include registered charities, trade unions, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional and business associations and community groups.

INSIDER PRESSURE GROUPS Pressure groups which include, or work closely alongside, politicians. They will often have strong party affiliations.

OUTSIDER PRESSURE GROUPS
These groups, and their campaigning methods, are public-driven. They will tend to use mainstream media more than insider pressure groups.

Raising awareness

The second series of the BBC's wildlife documentary, Blue Planet, was a major force in raising awareness of the effect of plastic waste on marine life. It was suggested that 88% of viewers changed their behaviour after watching the show.

Petitions

In 2018, a petition suggesting the law should require all supermarkets to offer plastic-free produce was debated in Parliament having gained 128,001 signatures. Petitions can be circulated and submitted to Parliament through petition.parliament.uk. All petitions made on the site which get over 10,000 signatures receive a written response from the government, and 100,000 signatures qualifies a petition to be considered for a debate in Parliament.

METHODS OF CAMPAIGNING

Climate Change

Direct Action

Extinction Rebellion is a movement that was formed in 2018 during a climate protest. The group advocate 'non-violent civil disobedience', and has used methods such as occupying bridges, planting trees in public spaces and attaching themselves to landmarks such as Buckingham Palace.

Popular protest

At the age of 15, Greta Thunberg skipped school to protest alone outside the Swedish Parliament, and in doing so, started a global movement of mass protests by young people, calling for more decisive action to be taken against climate change.

Political party

The Green Party formed in 1990 with the aim of preventing systematic damage to the environment through the political system. They campaign for electoral reform and stand upon a manifesto produced by their membership.

Lobbying

Surfers against Sewage was set up in 1990 by a group of water sports enthusiasts in reaction to increasingly polluted waters. The group campaigned for measures to be taken to protect the quality of water, attending government and business lobbies wearing a distinctive uniform of wetsuits and gasmasks. Since the group was set up, the quality of the water around the UK has improved hugely.

Non-Government organisations (NGOs)

NGOs are organisations which use a range of campaigning methods to work towards their goals. In 2010, Greenpeace contributed to the government postponing plans to build a third runway at Heathrow airport having taken a range of measures, from petitioning and protesting to purchasing and dividing land, and mounting legal challenges against the government.

10 Ways to Get Involved

1 Vote in elections
You can register to vote from age 16, which will mean you are ready to participate in local and general elections. You can find out more at yourvotematters.co.uk

2 Follow UK Parliament on social media
Parliament has a range of channels to help you stay up to date – you can follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

3 Join a political party
Most political parties have youth sections which deal with issues most relevant to you. Joining a party may entitle you to certain benefits, including voting for party leaders.

4 Contact your MP
Find details of your local representative at www.parliament.uk/findyourmp and get in contact. MPs hold 'surgeries' in their constituencies to give people an opportunity to meet them and discuss matters of concern in person.

5 Petition Parliament
If you feel strongly about an issue you may want to start or sign a petition. Find out more at petition.parliament.uk

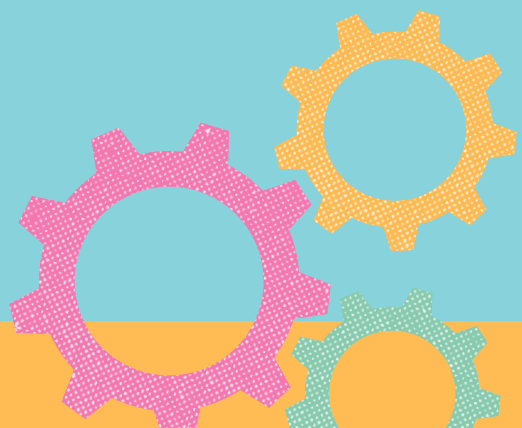
6 Visit Parliament
UK Parliament is free to visit, and no appointment is necessary. You can watch debates from the public viewing galleries or attend a select committee evidence session. The Scottish Parliament, Senedd Cymru and Northern Irish Assembly also allow visits.

7 Stand for election for the UK Youth Parliament
Any young person who is a resident of the UK, and aged between 11 and 18 years old has the right to stand for election and the right to vote for their Youth Parliament Member.

8 Keep up to date
At www.parliament.uk you can find Hansard's official record of what is said in parliamentary debates, as well as details of the week's business. Newspapers and political websites and TV programmes will also help you stay up to date.

9 Take part in a select committee inquiry
Select Committees inquire into pressing issues affecting government and the public, often using online surveys and requests for evidence from the public. This is a great way to influence Parliament's scrutiny process.

10 Stand as an MP
Anyone over the age of 18 who is a citizen of Britain, Ireland or the Commonwealth, and resides in the UK, is entitled to stand as an MP.



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