



HOUSE OF LORDS

Guide to Work in the Chamber



The House of Lords is an essential part of the UK Parliament. It checks and challenges the work of government. The chamber is where most of the work of the House takes place. Everyone can watch the chamber at work. Entry is free and you can watch online.

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Welcome

The chamber is the main meeting place for members to:

- check and change draft laws
- question government
- debate policy issues.



What's on

Watching in the chamber

Look at the day's schedule.

Questions

Legislation

Watching online

Look at www.parliament.uk/lords (click 'What's on' tab) for the day's business.

HOUSE OF LORDS BUSINESS
No. 275
Items marked † are new or have been altered.

Wednesday 20 March 2019 at 3.00pm

**Oral Questions, 30 minutes*

***Baroness Lister of Burtersett** to ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to prevent destitution among newly recognised refugees in the light of the British Red Cross Report *Still an ordeal*, published in December 2018.

***Lord Beith** to ask Her Majesty's Government what meetings have been scheduled to take place after 29 March 2019 between Ministers and representatives of the European Union, and what matters are planned for discussion at such meetings.

***Baroness Smith of Newham** to ask Her Majesty's Government what initiatives the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has put in place to strengthen bilateral relations with individual European Union member states after Brexit.

***Lord Wallace of Saltaire** to ask Her Majesty's Government what changes they are considering to the outsourcing of public services as a result of Interserve entering into administration.

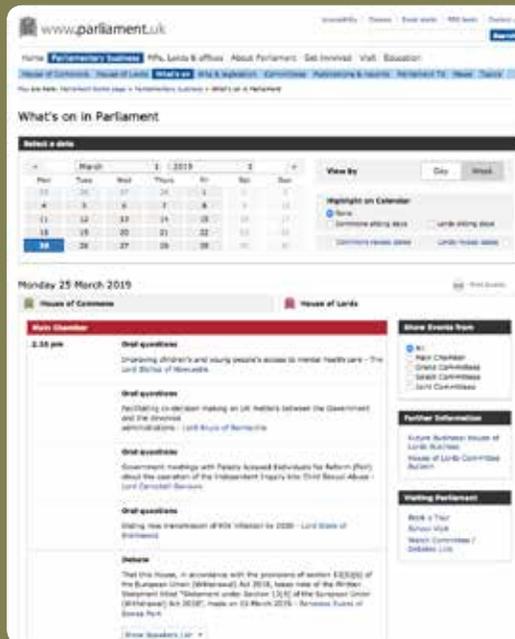
Trade Bill Third Reading [Baroness Fairhead] (*Queen's consent to be signified*)

Lord Bates to move that this House takes note of the economy in the light of the Spring Statement.

Grand Committee in the Moses Room at 3.45pm

The following five motions are expected to be debated together:

Common Agricultural Policy and Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 Consideration in Grand Committee [Lord Gardiner of Kimble]



Timings

What happens when

This timetable shows a typical pattern of business and when it happens. There are different patterns, particularly at different points in the parliamentary year.

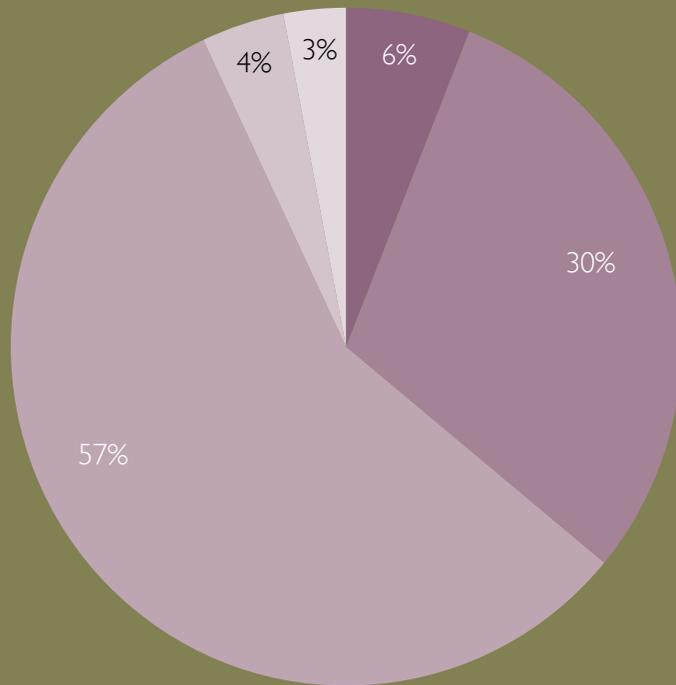
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10am					10am
11am				11am Questions	Legislation (sometimes debates)
12pm				11.30am	
1pm					
2pm					
3pm	2.30pm Questions	2.30pm Questions		Debates	
4pm	3pm	3pm	3pm Questions		
5pm	Legislation	Legislation	3.30pm		
6pm			Legislation		
7pm					
8pm	7.30pm Debate	7.30pm Debate			
9pm	8.30pm Legislation	8.30pm Legislation			
10pm					

The House usually sits Monday to Thursday. There is no set number of, or patterns for, Friday sittings; there are about 10 a year.

How time is spent

Questioning government	6%
Debating policy issues	30%
Legislation	57%
Statements	4%
Other	3%

Figures for 2016-17 session.



6 hrs **38** mins

Average chamber sitting

People and groups

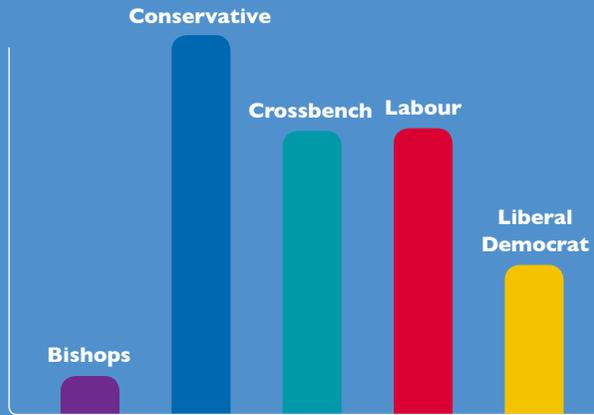
Members of the House of Lords come from different walks of life, from across the UK, and represent a wide range of professions and backgrounds. Most remain active in their careers and they apply this professional experience to the House's work.

Who's in charge?

Everyone. All members are responsible for discipline in the chamber, or 'keeping order'. There are agreed rules outlining how members should work in the chamber – any member can point out that another may not be following the rules. When a few want to speak at the same time, members say 'order, order' and 'this side' to make clear who most people think should speak next – that member remains standing to speak, the others sit down and usually get an opportunity later.



Members by party or group



There are about 800 members who are eligible to take part in the work of the House of Lords. This graph indicates the proportions of the parties and groups. For up to date figures go to www.parliament.uk/lords

People you might see



The **Lord Speaker** chairs business in the chamber, acts as an ambassador for the House in the UK and abroad and represents the House of Lords on ceremonial occasions. Elected by members, the Lord Speaker is politically impartial.



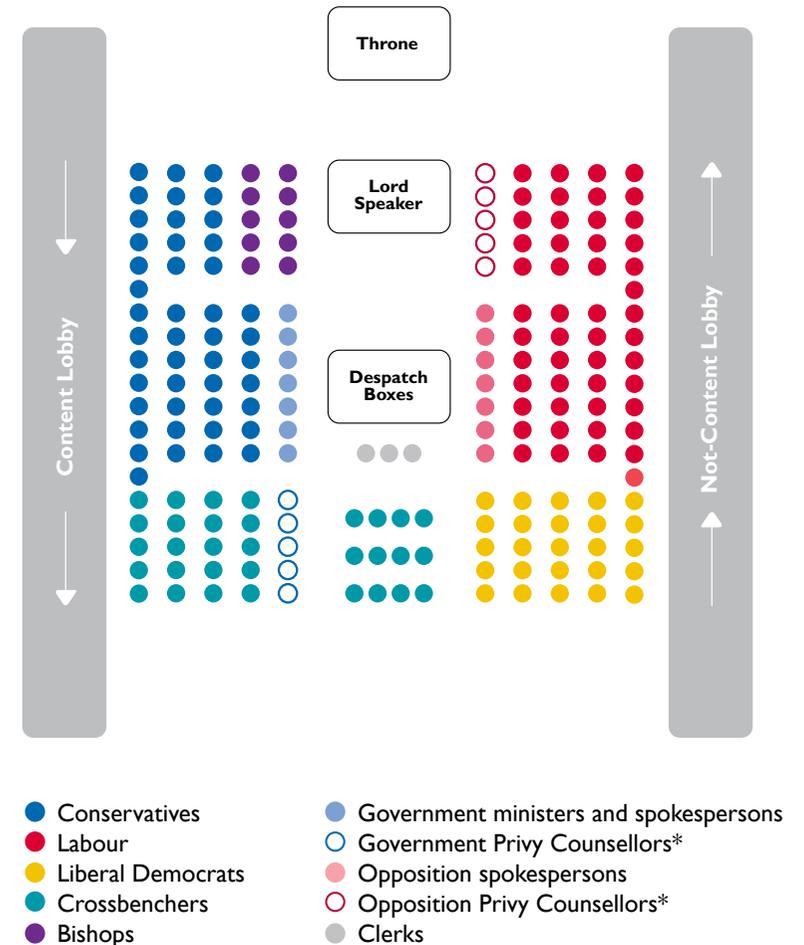
The **Leader of the House of Lords** is the most senior government representative in the House and a member of the cabinet. She is responsible for the government's business in the Lords and leads a team of about 25 ministers and whips. The Leader also has obligations to the whole House, expressing its collective feelings on formal occasions and giving procedural advice.



The **Clerk of the Parliaments** is the most senior official in the House of Lords. He is head of the administration and the chief procedural adviser. It is a role similar to that of a chief executive in an organisation. His duties in the chamber include announcing business.

The chamber

Who sits where



*Mostly former members of the cabinet

Questions

Checking and challenging government decisions and actions

Who

Questions are directed at the government. Any member can ask a question. A government minister or spokesperson answers.

When

Four are asked at the start of business in the first 30 minutes. They are set out, 'tabled', beforehand and listed on the day's schedule (the 'order paper').

What

Questions can be asked on any subject, local, national or international, for which the government is responsible.

Why

They enable members to:

- check on government activities
- raise issues of concern with the government
- seek information from the government.

How questions happen

- 1 Clerk of the Parliaments says the questioner's name.
- 2 Questioner responds: 'My Lords, I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name on the order paper.'
- 3 Minister or government spokesperson answers.
- 4 Questioner responds to the answer and may ask another question.
- 5 Minister or spokesperson speaks again.
- 6 Other members (usually from different groups) ask further questions on the same subject.

Statements

Probing government activity and decisions

Who

Government ministers or spokespersons deliver statements. Members ask questions afterwards.

When

Mid-afternoon or after question time (statements are not listed on the day's schedule).

What

Statements are made about emergencies and important public policy initiatives, and also after international summits.

Why

Statements are an opportunity for the government to give information to the House and another chance for members to:

- raise concerns
- seek information
- scrutinise government decisions.

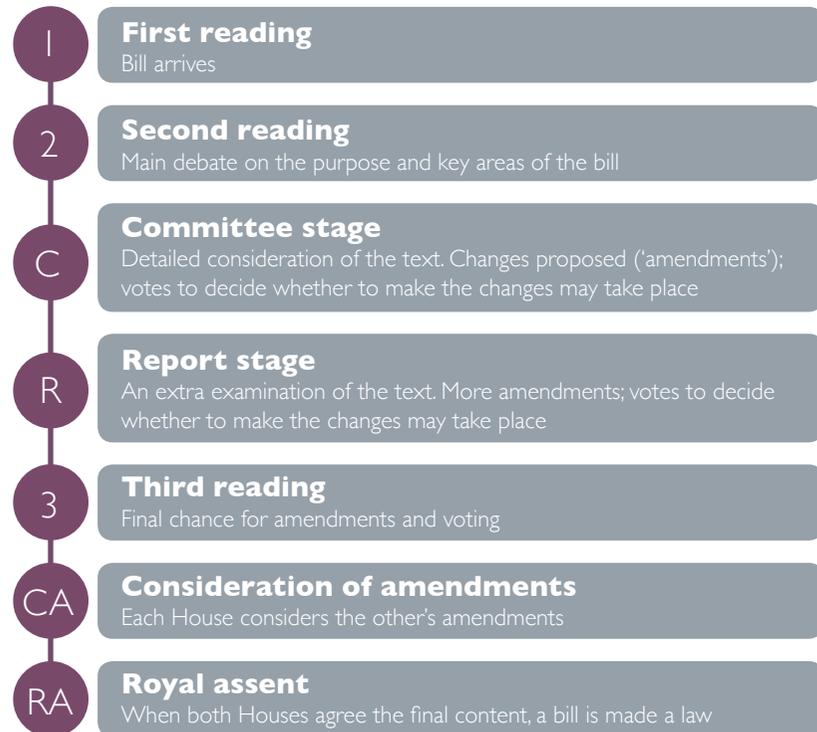




Making laws

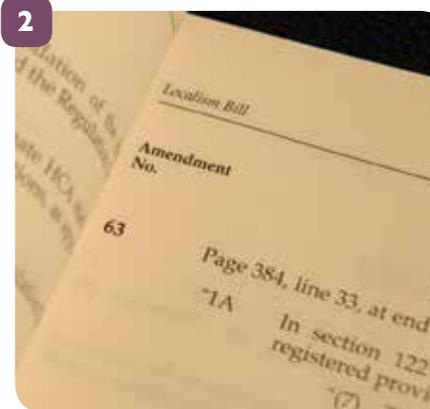
Checking the detail and making better laws

Bills (draft laws) can start in either House of Parliament, but they must be examined and agreed by both to become law. Bills are checked in these stages in each House (the way they carry out the stages is different).



How checking and voting on bills happens

- 1 Clerk says bill title, and the stage.
- 2 Members discuss the issues in a bill, and make their arguments for and against amendments.
- 3 Votes ('divisions') on amendments.
 - a At the end of discussion on an amendment, the Lord Speaker (or a deputy) asks **'As many as are of that opinion will say content. To the contrary not-content'** (see page 16).
 - b If there are shouts of both content and not-content, the Lord Speaker says **'Clear the Bar'** (see page 16) and a vote has started.
 - c Bells ring to alert members outside the chamber to the vote.
 - d After three minutes, during which each side appoints 'tellers' (see page 16) to count the votes, the Lord Speaker asks again **'As many as are of that opinion will say content. To the contrary not-content'**.
 - e If there are shouts of both content and not-content, the Lord Speaker says **'The contents will go to the right by the Throne. The not-contents to the left by the Bar'**.
- 4 Members walk through either lobby (see diagram on page 7) according to how they want to vote, and their votes are counted by the tellers.
- 5 Clerk gives the result to a teller from the winning side; they pass it to the Lord Speaker.
- 6 The Lord Speaker reads out the result **'There have voted content [number], not-content [number], and so the contents [or not-contents] have it.'**



If the 'contents' win, it usually means the government has lost and the House is making a change to their bill.

Debates

Debating current issues and drawing the government's attention to concerns

Who

Any member can put down ('table') a subject to debate, and any member can take part. Most debates have a list of speakers; members speak in the listed order and time is usually divided evenly – the person who started the debate and party spokespeople are allowed more time. A government minister or spokesperson responds at the end to the issues raised in the debate.

When

Short debates are usually during a break in the legislative business; longer debates take place on Thursdays (see timetable on page 3). Members table their debate in advance.

What

Debates take place on any subject, and a wide range are covered – either on public policy issues or topical concerns. Short debates last for about an hour, and longer debates for anything between two and five hours.

Why

Debates are an opportunity for members to:

- discuss important and current issues
- draw the government's attention to concerns.

154

debates held
in the 2016-17
session

How debates happen

- 1 Clerk says the name of the member who has tabled the debate.
- 2 Member who has tabled the debate starts.
- 3 Other members contribute, in the order on the list of speakers.
- 4 Opposition party spokesperson speaks.
- 5 Government minister or spokesperson responds.
- 6 Member who tabled the debate makes closing remarks.



Members' different backgrounds are reflected in the topics they debate.

Language key

Amendment	Proposal for change to a bill or motion
Backbench member	Member of the House who is not a minister, whip or spokesperson
Bar of the House	The end of the chamber opposite the Throne
Bill	Draft law
Cabinet	Group of MPs, and some members of the House of Lords, that is the primary decision-making body in government
Clerk	Official of the House of Lords
Content/not-content	Agree/disagree
Division	Vote
Frontbench member	Member of the House who is a minister, whip or spokesperson
House rises/up	End of business
Legislation	Laws, and the process of making them
Minister	Member of the government, responsible for part of the government's work, eg schools
Opposition	The party with the second largest number of seats in the House of Commons
Order paper	Day's schedule
Sitting	Meeting of the House
Spokesperson	Person responsible for speaking on behalf of their party on a particular subject
Table	Propose, or put down, a question, debate, motion or amendment for discussion
Teller	Person counting members passing through division lobby in a vote
Whip	Party official responsible for the discipline of members in their party

Lords online

Keep track of House of Lords business



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 www.parliament.uk/lords

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