



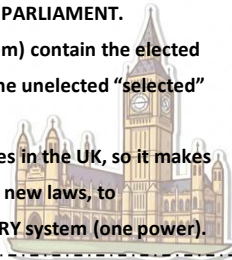
Structure of Parliament: HOUSE of COMMONS

- **ELECTED:** 650 MPs represent 650 UK constituencies (approx. 70,000 voters each).
- **Prime Minister (PM):** Leader of the largest party (usually with a 51% majority) becomes PM via ROYAL APPOINTMENT.
- **Government/Executive:** PM forms the Government EXECUTIVE by choosing CABINET members (must be MPs from Commons or Lords) to run departments (e.g. Health Minister & Department of Health or CHANCELLOR of EXCHEQUER & HM Treasury). **FUSION of POWERS**
- **Coalition/Hung Parliament:** A party without a 51% majority can form a COALITION with another party. Before an agreement, it's a HUNG PARLIAMENT (e.g., 2010 Conservative & Liberal Coalition).
- **Opposition/Government Seating:** The 2nd largest party (OPPOSITION) sits on the right of TV screens; the party in power (GOVERNMENT) sits on the left.
- **Speaker:** The SPEAKER is an MP elected by MPs to chair debates and ensure Parliamentary rules are followed.

Paper 2: UK LEGISLATIVE (Parliament)

The UK Legislative body is centred in PARLIAMENT. Its two main houses (Bicameral system) contain the elected MPs in the House of Commons and the unelected "selected" Lords.

Parliament is where SOVEREIGNTY lies in the UK, so it makes the final decision on everything from new laws, to constitutional changes. It is a UNITARY system (one power).



The Changing Power Relationship between the House of Commons & the House of Lords.

- 1. Early Parliaments (1265 - 1707)**
1265 1st Parliament called by noble Simon de Montfort to create legitimise his control over the weak king Henry III.
1295 1st Parliament called by a king, Edward I to legitimise his taxation policies to fund war v France. Commoners (non-nobles) were invited to represent the shires and towns but were often under the control of their Lords (nobles). There were no separate houses.
- 1. Growth of House of Commons (1341-1900)**
1341 The Commons were housed separately as there were now too many representatives.
1400 House of Commons claim the "Power of the Purse" convention. Money / taxation bills should start in the Commons. House of Lords was still considered the superior house due to their wealth; patronage (sponsors of MPs); and elite status.
- 1. Parliament Acts 1911 & 1949**
1911 **Removal of Lord's "veto" power over money bills** - changed to 2 year delay. Liberal threat to flood the Lords with Liberal Lords over the debate on National Insurance. **Power of the Elected v Unelected.**
1949 **Removal of Lord's "veto" on any bill** - changed to a 1 year delay. Labour forced Lord's reforms over the debate on the creation of the NHS.
1949 **Salisbury Convention.** Lord's agree not to delay or block any manifesto promises of a Government.

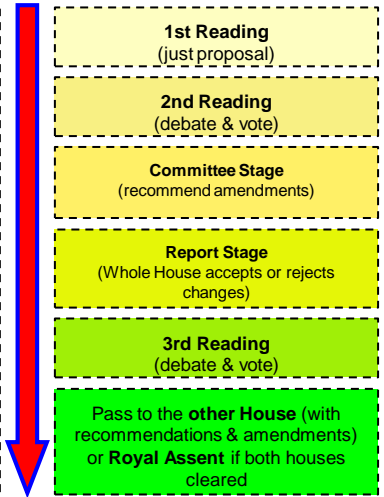


- 4. House of Lords Act 1998**
New Labour Gov't reduced Hereditary Peers to 92 representatives. Also created the concept of LIFE PEERS - selected individuals who would hold the title and place of a Lord for their lifetime. Life Peers would be chosen by the current PM / Government and from special committees in Parliament. **Another demonstration of Commons dictating to Lords.**
- 4. House of Lords Act 2026**
Starmer's manifesto promise to reform the House of Lords has started by **eliminating the concept of "Hereditary Peers"**. As a compromise and a nod to the potential loss of experienced and active lords, 15 were granted "Life Peers" status: comes into effect May 2026.

How a Bill becomes a Law

This process must go through the **House of Commons & House of Lords.**

Only after that will it go to **Royal Assent** and be made an Act of Parliament (a new law).



Legislative Process

- 1) A BILL is a proposal for a new law or piece of legislation.
- 2) A WHITE PAPER is a BILL proposed by the Government.
- 3) A GREEN PAPER is a private BILL proposed by an MP.
- 4) BOTH HOUSES can propose BILLS but BOTH HOUSES must also agree before a BILL becomes LEGISLATION.
- 5) Final stage = ROYAL ASSENT (but this is a CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION) The King's legal right exists but not used since 1708.

Parliamentary Committees

Legislative Committees are set up to scrutinise new BILLS. They are made up of cross-party MPs roughly in proportion to the parties in the House of Commons.

Before 2010, party leaders & whips decided their memberships. Since **WRIGHT REFORMS 2010**, Committee membership is more independent and MPs can volunteer/ mutual selection process by Backbench Committee. Committees REPORT back to Parliament and offer advice & potential amendments BUT no real power to change or stop bills. But they do offer a chance for Parliament to hear from experts and those concerned by the proposed new laws.

Select Committees scrutinise the departments of the Executive. They have the power to call upon anybody from PM, Minister or Civil Servants and testimony is under oath like a court of law. Investigations can be long and complex e.g. Covid Enquiry Committee or Privileges Committee (investigated PM Johnson & whether he misled Parliament over partygate).

The Power of **Select Committees** is through their ability to thoroughly investigate and interrogate the Executive and the influence and respect that their investigation and report carries. Whilst they look toothless on paper (they can make recommendations and advise), their investigations often carry a heavyweight bite. Its what separates them from Legislative committees.



Structure of Parliament: HOUSE of LORDS

- **Membership:** Over 800 members (2026).
- **Life Peers:** Most MPs are LIFE PEERS. Mostly SELECTED for their specialisms (e.g. Lord Sugar- business, Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson- sport & disabilities).
- **Hereditary Peers:** 92 HEREDITARY PEERS selected from noble families (slated for removal by the proposed 2026 House of Lords Reform Act).
- **Role:** SCRUTINISES Bills from the Commons, although both Houses can propose legislation. Holds government to account. Can delay bills (12 months).
- **Extra Scrutiny:** Spends more time on legislation (over 50% vs. Commons' 30%) with no time limits on debates/readings.
- **Case Study: Rwanda Bill (April 2024)**
- Lord's tried to delay Rwanda Bill when Conservative Government only





COMPARISONS of UK v US Legislative Bodies



UK House of Commons vs US House of Representatives: Examine the ways in which the US Congress and UK Parliament pass legislation

<p>1.. STRUCTURALLY similar on the surface but different in power Same UK & US processes for legislation (3 readings & committee stage). MPs scrutinise new bills through Public Bills Committees - but these only have the power to advise and suggest amendments. Greater independence since 2010 Wright Reforms but still toothless if the Government refuses to change bills. E.g. Rwanda Act 2024 (included backbench Tory MPs), Online Safety Act 2023 (Committee called for stricter age verification- ignored).</p>	<p>1.. STRUCTURALLY similar on the surface but different in power The Committee Stage has the power to "pigeonhole" or "kill the bill" before new legislation reaches the voting stage. Nicknamed the "Graveyard" of bills- ave. 90% of all bills are blocked at Committee stage, 50% of "credible" bills blocked.</p>
<p>2.. STRUCTURAL differences = Influence of the Executive over Legislative Dominance of Governing party - on average will pass 90+% of new bills. Fusion of Powers = means that the Executive dominate their majority in the Commons. Either by Whips, Patronage ("payroll MPs" - who have government/ Cabinet jobs) and party loyalty.</p>	<p>2.. STRUCTURAL differences = Independence from Executive Presidents are excluded from Congress apart from "State of the Union" speech. Usually once a year. Separation of Powers offers the Legislative more independence from Executive over legislation. In contrast to UK only 5% of legislation is ever passed each year.</p>
<p>3.. CULTURAL difference in power: Commons dominates Lords in unequal Bicameral System Commons holds "Power of the Purse" since 1400s, but since Parliament Acts 1911 & 1949, Commons has the final say on legislation over the Upper House (Lords).</p>	<p>3.. STRUCTURAL difference in power: Equal legislative powers with Senate in a comparable Bicameral System Representatives holds the "Power of the Purse" in US Constitution and all money bills must originate from Lower House (like UK) but Senate can block or veto bills with the same constitutional power.</p>

UK House of Commons vs US House of Representatives: Analyse how members of the US House of Representatives and the UK House of Commons perform their representative function

<p>1.. UK representative of their Constituencies MPs are the local representatives of their 70,000 constituencies. Their role is to bring local issues to the national legislative body of Parliament. Allows direct representation of the people and geographic areas.</p>	<p>1.. US representative of their districts Congressmen are the representatives of their 700,000 voters in a local district within each state. Their role is to bring local issues to the federal legislative body of Congress. Embodiment of "We the People" US Constitution of Popular Sovereignty.</p>
<p>2.. UK representative of their parties Contrast to their local representation is the role MPs play within their political party. In Parliament, they often conform to the direction of their party and its leadership due to a system of party loyalty, whips and patronage.</p>	<p>2.. US representative of their parties Contrast to their local representation is the role Reps play within their political party. In Congress, they often conform to the direction of their party and its leadership due to a system of party loyalty, whips and patronage.</p>
<p>3.. STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCE in Electoral basis & Mandate Voted for by FPTP system but voters often choose the party that they want to see in government rather than the qualities of their individual candidates. The "fusion of powers" emphasises the link between Executive & Legislative bodies.</p>	<p>3.. STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCE in Electoral basis & Mandate Voted for by FPTP system but due to the 2 year election cycle, Representatives have to be more sensitive to local needs and the "separation of powers" from the Executive means they have separate, distinct mandate to the President.</p>

UK House of Lords vs US Senate: Similarities

<p>1.. Part of a Bicameral Legislative System (STRUCTURAL similarities in principle) House of Lords has the same process as Commons in terms of passing legislation. 3 readings, Committee & Report stage. Acts as a second level of STRUCTURAL scrutiny to new legislation. Like in USA, money bills originate from the Lower House.</p>	<p>1.. Part of a Bicameral Legislative System (STRUCTURAL similarities in principle) Senate has the same process as Congress in terms of passing legislation. 3 readings, Committee & Report stage. Acts as a second level of STRUCTURAL scrutiny to new legislation. Like in UK, money bills originate from the Lower House.</p>
<p>2.. Sense of greater permanency & stability to legislative process As the Lords are all "Life Peers" it means that they can only be replaced due to lack of attendance or serious criminal activity. This offers more stability to their membership and thus they do not have the pressures of constituencies or elections every 4-5 years.</p>	<p>2.. Sense of greater permanency & stability to legislative process As Senators have a 6 year election/ lifespan they have more time and greater permanency compared to the 2 year Representatives and 4 year President. Only 1/ 3 are changed during any election too (stability of membership).</p>
<p>3.. Check on Executive Power Lords will spend on average double the amount of time scrutinising new Government bills. Upper House can delay bills by 12 months to make the Executive/ Legislative reconsider key recommendations or amendments. Lords can call Cabinet Ministers to account in the Lords.</p>	<p>3.. Check on Executive Power Senate Committees will question Presidential nominees to key posts e.g. Supreme Court, Attorney General Senate can reject Presidential nominations e.g. Matt Gaetz (Attorney General 2025). Senate can "kill" legislation- equally as powerful as lower house in that regard.</p>

UK House of Lords vs US Senate: Differences

<p>1.. Unequal power over legislation within the Bicameral System (CULTURAL THEORY - dominance of elected Commons vs unelected Lords) Lords can delay bills for 12 months BUT they have no power to veto. Parliament Act 1949. They can <u>advise</u> amendments and send legislation back to Commons (Ping-Pong politics) but they can be bullied by Commons & PM into passing legislation - e.g. Sunak & Rwanda Bill 2024.</p>	<p>1.. Equal powers over legislation within the Bicameral System (STRUCTURAL THEORY - US Constitution enshrines the power of the Senate in Article 1) Senate has the same powers to vote on bills and kill bills at Committee / Reading stages. Senate has the power to kill/ delay bills by filibuster.</p>
<p>2.. SELECTED Members of Parliament (CULTURAL GROUP - Lords) Lords are selected and announced officially in New Year's and King's Birthday Honour List. Often selected by Government, but also a House of Lords Appointment Commission (2000- PM Blair creates an independent commission to appoint non-political peers and vet potential "life peers".) Former Party Leaders are often sent up to the Lords e.g. Lord Cameron and Blair. Or Specialist/ Selected Lords - Baroness Lawrence (mother of Stephen Lawrence, who campaigned for the Independent investigation in the racism inherent in the Met Police).</p>	<p>2.. ELECTED Members of Congress (STRUCTURAL THEORY - US Constitution, Article 1) Article 1 of US Constitution = Congress Elected every 6 years by State Elections. 2 per state for the 50 states. Only 1/ 3 go for election at any one time.</p>
<p>3.. Greater Independence from internal and external influences. 20-25% of Lords are "Crossbenchers" - independent lords who vote without Party influence. Life Peerage is for life so they are not subject to the whims of elections/ social/ political pressure. E.g. 2026 Lords delay on Assisted Suicide Bill.</p>	<p>3.. Senators are part of the PARTY System and linked to their STATE. Senators are elected to represent the major 2 parties and their states. 2 Senators represent the whole state = principle of FEDERALISM in the Constitution. There are Majority & Minority leaders in the Senate with whips etc. Very rare to vote out of line with the Party- e.g. Trump's 2nd Impeachment trial 7 Republicans voted vs Trump- but they needed 17 to turn in total.</p>