

What is UK Parliament?



Lots of things that affect our lives, such as schools, hospitals and the environment, are discussed in Parliament. But what is Parliament?

Key Words

House of Lords

Member of the
House of Lords

Government

Parliament

Law

Election

MP

Debate

House of Commons

Where Is the UK Parliament?

The Houses of Parliament, also known as the Palace of Westminster, is in the centre of London.

It is one of the most iconic buildings in the world and includes the green-coloured benches in the House of Commons Chamber and the red-coloured benches in the House of Lords Chamber. It also includes the famous clock tower, popularly known as Big Ben.



Where Is the UK Parliament?

To give the people of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland more say over what happens in their countries, the UK Parliament has devolved (given away) some of its powers to other national and regional bodies.

For example, in Scotland there is a Scottish Parliament, which has elected members who make some decisions for Scotland. There is also the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly.



What Is the UK Parliament?

Parliament is made up of three parts: the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the king or queen – known as the Monarch.

The House of Commons is made up of Members of Parliament (MPs). MPs are elected to represent our views in the House of Commons.

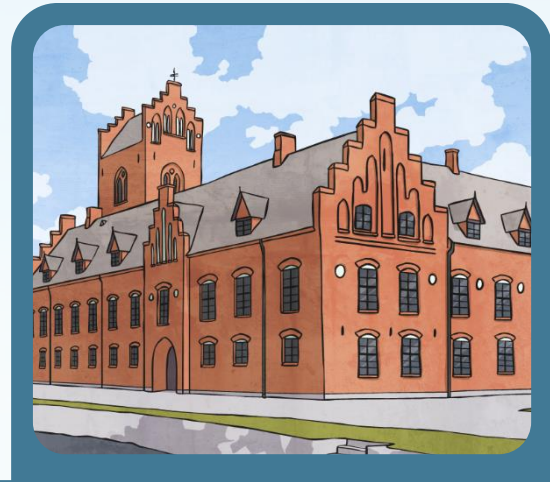
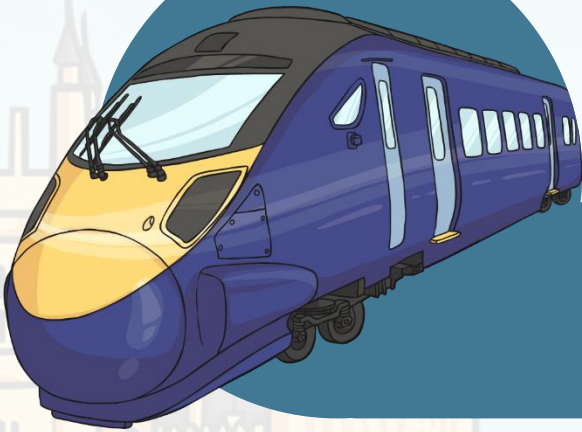
In the House of Lords, members are appointed from inside and outside of Parliament, based on their special experience and knowledge, to check and challenge the work of the Government.

The role of the Monarch is mainly ceremonial these days. The Monarch meets the **Prime Minister** once a week to hear what's going on in Parliament, signs new laws (gives Royal Assent) and attends the State Opening of Parliament.

What Does Parliament Do?

The main work of Parliament is to:

- check and challenge the work of the Government;
- make and change laws;
- debate the important issues of the day.



The issues discussed in Parliament affect us all and include health, the environment, transport, jobs, schools and crime.

Is Parliament Different from the Government?

Yes! The Government's job is to run the country. Parliament's job is to check and challenge what the Government does.

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 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.

There are also many Lords who are not members of either the Government or the Opposition. They don't belong to any political party. They are called 'crossbenchers' as they sit across the middle of the House of Lords Chamber.

How Can I Get Involved?

The UK Parliament is *your* Parliament and your thoughts and ideas matter!

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.

Let's see how some young people are getting involved...



How Can I Get Involved?

Debating...

If you are between 11 and 18 years old, you can become a member of the UK Youth Parliament, which comes to the House of Commons every year to hold a debate about issues that are important to them.

Every year, young people from around the UK also take part in a House of Lords Chamber event where they debate big issues, such as freedom of speech or climate change.

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 made a promise to stop selling eggs from caged hens by 2015.



Speaking Up...

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



We'll be learning more about how *you* can get involved with Parliament throughout the week!

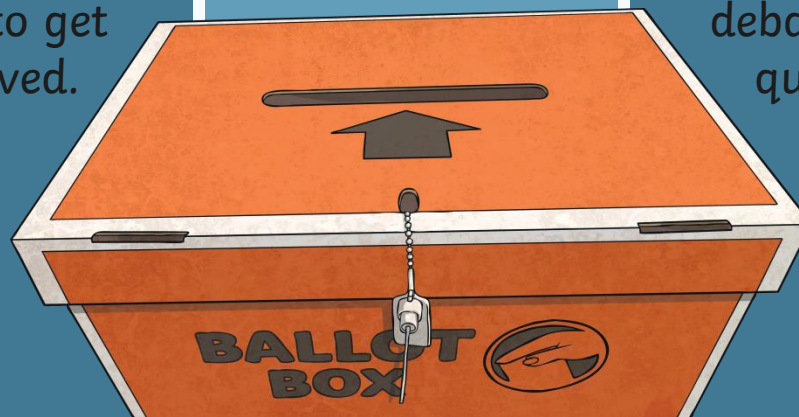
What Is Parliament Week?

UK Parliament Week is a festival which takes place every year.

It engages people from across the country with the work of the UK Parliament, explores what Parliament means to them and empowers them to get involved.

Organisations from across the country run events and activities all about Parliament – just like your school is doing now!

Events from last year's UK Parliament Week included lunches with politicians, special film screenings in cinemas, community debates and quizzes.



Answer the following questions:

1. Where are the Houses of Parliament?

2. Some countries in the United Kingdom have their own mini-government called assemblies to make decisions about their own countries. Circle the countries that have assemblies.

Wales

Australia

Scotland

Yorkshire

Northern Ireland

Canada

3. Circle the three parts that make up the UK Parliament.

House of Commons

House of Lords

MP

Monarch (King or Queen)

Answer the following questions:

5. What is the job of the Government?

- a) To argue with each other.
- b) To run the country.
- c) To organise birthday parties.

6. What is the job of Parliament?

- a) To run the country.
- b) To plan national sporting events.
- c) To make sure that the Government are doing their job properly.

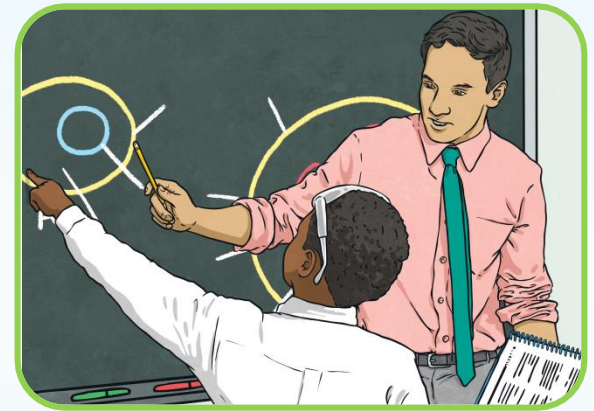
7. The Queen mainly goes to Parliament for the opening ceremony to make a speech, but can you name one other thing she does?

What Issues Are Important to You?

Parliament discusses issues which affect us all.

Here are some issues that may be important to you:

- Animal Welfare
- Health
- Education
- Homelessness
- Fairness
- Defence
- Environment



Write a short persuasive paragraph about an issue that is important to you. What would you like Parliament to do about this issue?

Plenary

Write down the three most important things that the UK Parliament is responsible for.

