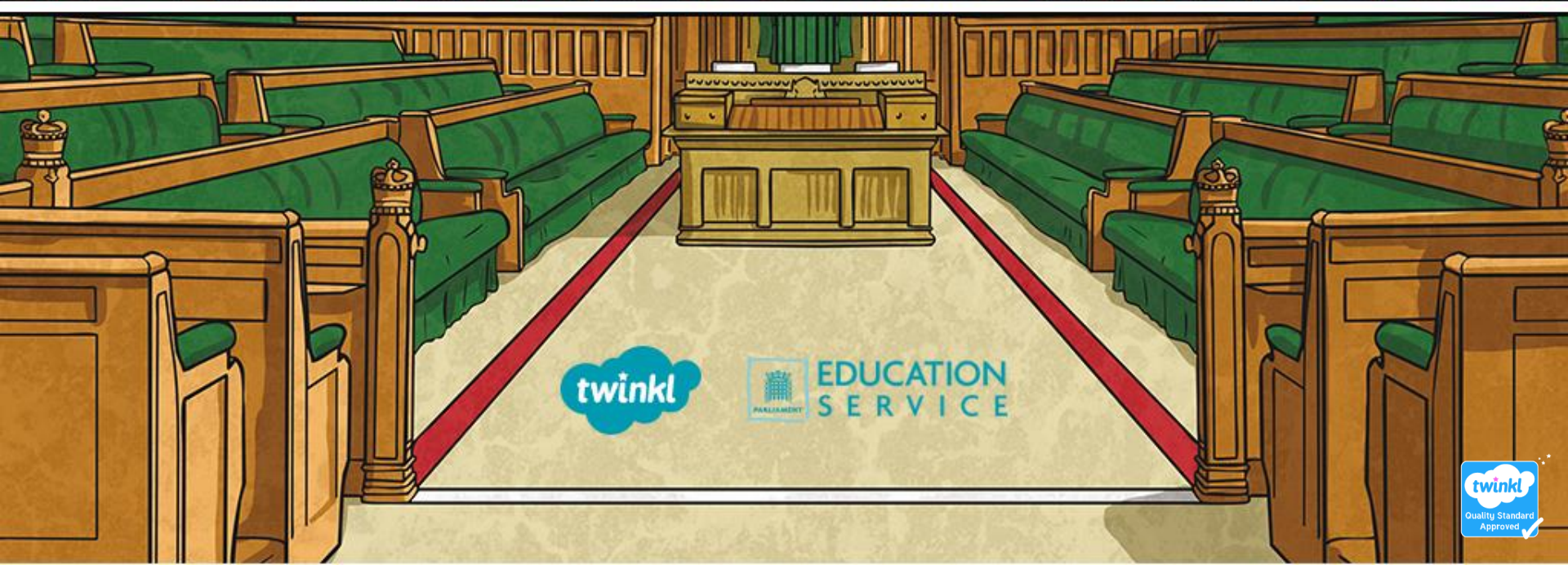


An illustration of the interior of the House of Commons. The room is filled with rows of red upholstered benches facing each other. In the center, there is a wooden table with papers and a small desk. At the far end, a red carpeted aisle leads to a raised platform with a throne and other ornate furniture. The walls are dark wood-paneled.

# House of Commons & House of Lords



# What Is the House of Commons?

The House of Commons is where all the Members of Parliament (MPs) spend a lot of their time working and debating.

There are 650 MPs, and each one has the important job of representing people from their local area (constituency) in Parliament.

They make laws to protect us and to make sure the UK is a fair place to live.

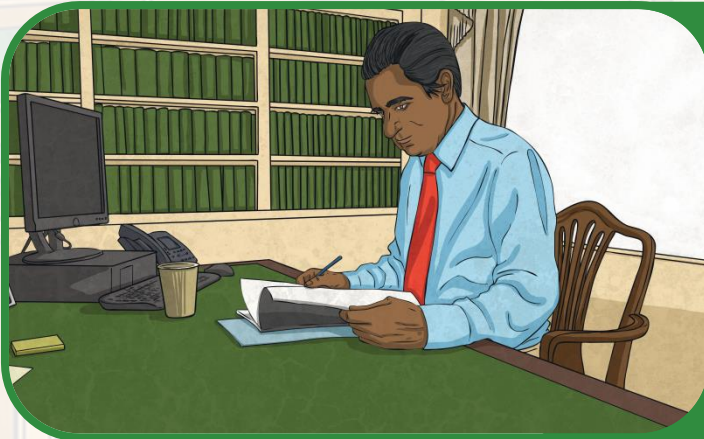
MPs are voted for by the people in their constituency in general elections.

# What Do MPs Do?

MPs debate important topics and laws in the House of Commons Chamber. It's here that MPs can challenge the work of the Government.

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

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



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

# Who Else Works in the House of Commons?

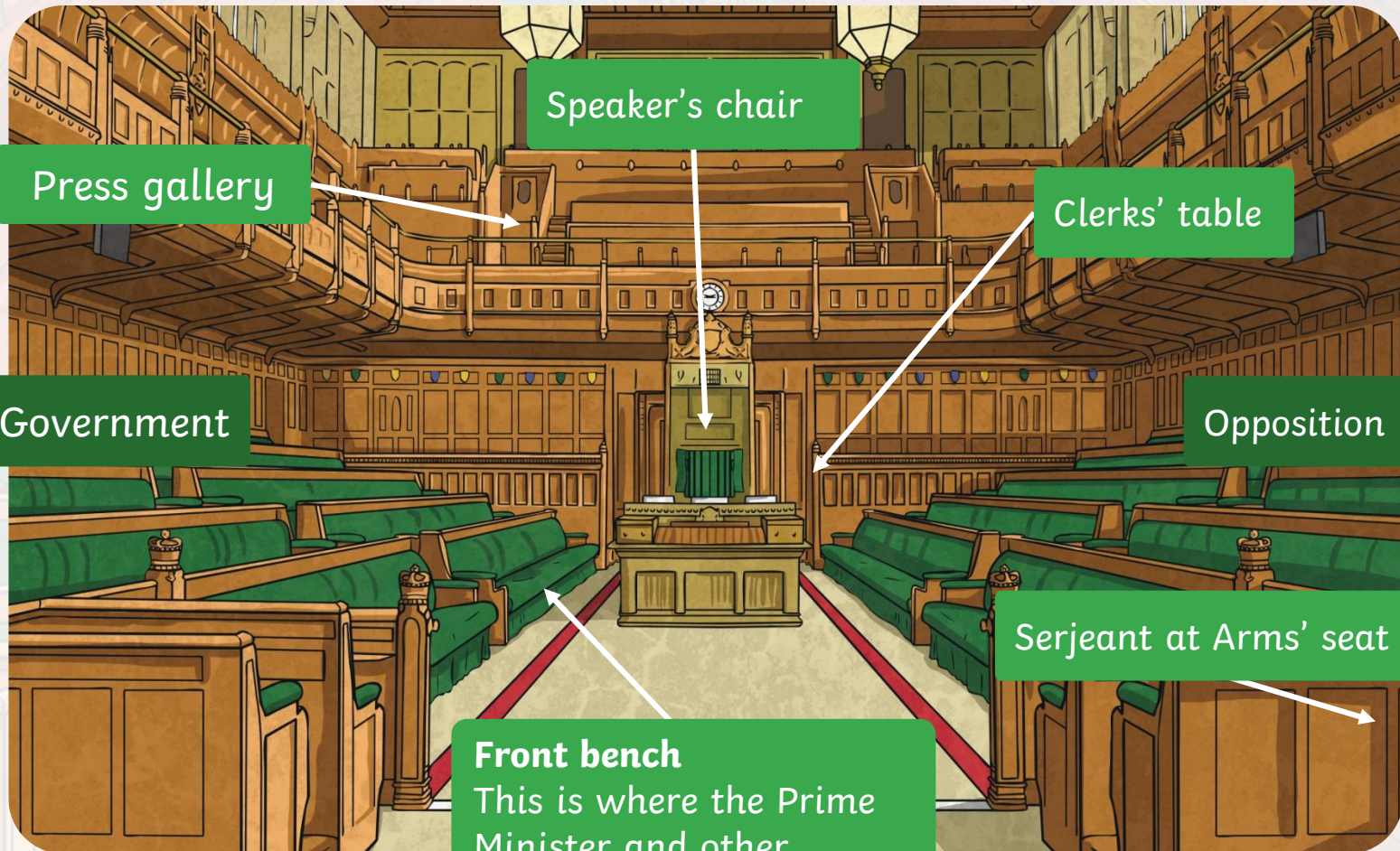
There are also lots of other jobs in the House of Commons:

The **Speaker** sits at the head of the Chamber and is responsible for making sure the MPs are polite and fair.

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

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

# What Does the House of Commons Look Like?



Speaker's chair

Press gallery

Clerks' table

Government

Opposition

Serjeant at Arms' seat

**Front bench**

This is where the Prime Minister and other government ministers sit.

# What Is the House of Lords?

The House of Lords has about 800 members.

Most are called 'life peers', because they are given membership for their lifetime. Their titles are not passed to their children. They are chosen for their expert knowledge and experience, so that they can use their special skills to look carefully at new laws.

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



# What Do Members of the House of Lords Do?

The job of the Lords is to question and challenge the work of the Government. They spend lots of time examining ideas for new laws in detail.



If they think a plan for a new law could be improved they make changes.

As many members have professional knowledge in areas such as education and health, they can use this experience to check that the detail in plans for new laws makes sense, is fair and will work for different groups of people.

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

# What Does the House of Lords Look Like?

Lord Speaker's seat

**Throne**

This is where the Monarch sits at the State Opening of Parliament

Cameras for filming

Despatch boxes

Government

Opposition

**Cross benches**

The House of Lords Chamber has benches that cross the middle of the floor. About 200 members who are not members of a political party sit here and are called 'crossbenchers'.

Clerks' table



## Activity 1: The House of Commons and the House of Lords Discussion Questions

What do the letters MP stand for?

Why do we need MPs?

Name three things that they do.

MP stands for: \_\_\_\_\_

Why do we need MPs? \_\_\_\_\_

Things that MPs do:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Who are members of the Lords?

Name three things that the Lords do.

The members of the Lords are: \_\_\_\_\_

Things that the Lords do:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Name four differences between the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

What does it mean to 'question and challenge' the work of the Government?

To question and challenge the Government means:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have a go at these questions...



# Write to Your MP

Every week MPs get lots of emails, phone calls and letters. They try to answer every one and have researchers and caseworkers to help them. Email is one of the easiest ways MPs can keep in regular contact with the people they represent and to find out their views.



You can contact your local MP too! If there is an issue you care about or something you'd like to see changed, your MP can try to help that happen.

What important issue would you email your MP about?

If there is something concerning you about our current situation and how the government are running things. You could write to your MP.

# Nominate a Life Peer



Is there someone you know who is a great role model? Is it someone who you think would have a cool head and be able to put their point of view across clearly?

It could be someone famous who inspires you or someone in your local community whose hard work makes a difference.

Who would you nominate to be a life peer and work in the House of Lords to help make the laws?

Write a short paragraph on who you would nominate and why.