

Houses of Parliament – House of Lords

What is the role of member of the House of Lords?

Members of the House of Lords study the bills, or suggested laws, that have been voted for in the House of Commons. They can vote to pass the laws, or reject them. They are not allowed to reject bills concerned with money such as taxes—these are automatically passed.

There are rules in place to prevent the House of Lords from voting against bills that have received large support in the House of Commons.

However, members develop bills and make them more workable. The House of Lords also provides a second place where ideas, suggestions, and current issues can be debated. It is the highest court in the land (except in Scotland).

If they suggest changes, the law then goes back to the House of Commons where MPs discuss the changes.

When both Houses agree on the law, the Queen then approves it.

Who sits in the House of Lords?

There are about 780 people who are entitled to sit in the House of Lords. They consist of people who have been made a peer, or noble, for their lifetime, bishops and archbishops, and law lords (judges). These are all appointed, not elected by the people.

Two people are members because of their job (The Duke of Norfolk, who is the Earl Marshal, and the Marquess of Cholmondeley, the Lord Chamberlain, who both help to organise royal events).

92 people are *hereditary peers*. These are members of the House of Lords because one of their ancestors was made a member. All the hereditary peers in the country used to be allowed in the House. But recent government changes mean only 92 of them are allowed now. They are chosen by the other Lords.

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Other members are specially chosen by the prime minister because they are experts in their field, like Lord Alan Sugar who was chosen by Gordon Brown's Labour government to help people establish businesses.

The prime minister recommends that someone be made a peer, and the Queen appoints them.

The twenty-six most senior Bishops of the Church of England also sit in the House of Lords, they are called the Lords Spiritual.

What are Crossbenchers?

Many members of the House of Lords sit as *Crossbenchers*. This means they do not support either the government or opposition parties, but instead are independent of party politics. They got their name because the benches where they sit are placed across the aisle which separates the government and opposition supporters.

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