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The House of Commons

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The House of Commons is made up of 635 elected members, known as Members of Parliament (MPs). The House of Commons is presided over by the Speaker, a member acceptable to the whole House.



MPs sit on two sides of the hall, one side for the governing party and the other for the opposition. The first two rows of seats are occupied by the leading members of both parties (called 'front-benchers'), the back benches belong to the rank-and-file MPs ('back-benchers'). Each session of the House of Commons lasts for 160-175 days.





Parliament has intervals during its work. MPs are paid for their parliamentary work and have to attend -the sittings. MPs have to catch the Speaker's eye when they want to speak, then they rise from where they have been sitting to address the House and must do so without either reading a prepared speech or consulting notes.



Although there is some space given to other than government proposals, the lion's share of parliamentary time is taken by the party in power.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

A proposed law, a bill, has to go through three stages in order to become an Act of Parliament. These are called readings. The first reading is a formality and is simply the publication of the proposal. The second reading involves debate on the principles of the bill, its examination by a parliamentary committee, and the third reading—a report stage, when the work of the committee is reported on to the House. This is usually the most important stage in the process.



The third reading is often a formality too; if six members table a motion, then there has to be a debate on the third reading. If the majority of MPs still vote for the bill, it is sent to the House of Lords for discussion. When the Lords agree, the bill is taken to the Queen for Royal assent. All bills must pass through both houses before being sent for signature by the Queen, when they become Acts of Parliament and the Law of the Land.

