

House of Commons

Here, over 600 democratically-elected Members of Parliament (MPs) meet to debate and make laws. Each MP represents a particular area of the UK known as a *constituency* and becomes an MP by gaining more votes from people in that constituency (*constituents*) than anyone else.

Most MPs belong to one of three main political parties. After a General Election, the leader of the party with the most MPs is asked by the Queen to become *Prime Minister*. The Prime Minister then forms a government to manage the country. The next largest party forms the *Official Opposition* with a mandate to provide voters with an alternative viewpoint to the government.



In the Chamber

Why do people keep standing up and sitting down?

Parliamentarians signal that they want to speak by standing up. This is called '*catching the Speaker's eye*'.

Why is the Chamber rarely full?

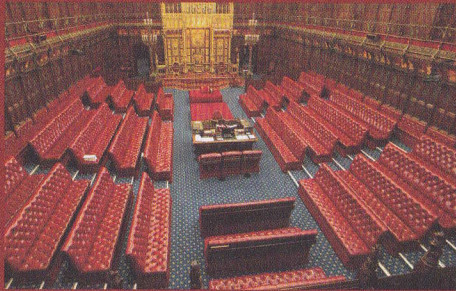
Not all work takes place in the Chamber. Most Members have other commitments such as committee work and dealing with constituency matters.



House of Lords

The House of Lords is the second chamber of Parliament and shares responsibility for making laws with the House of Commons. The Lords spends the majority of its time on detailed and thorough scrutiny, checking and challenging government to think harder about its legislation and policies.

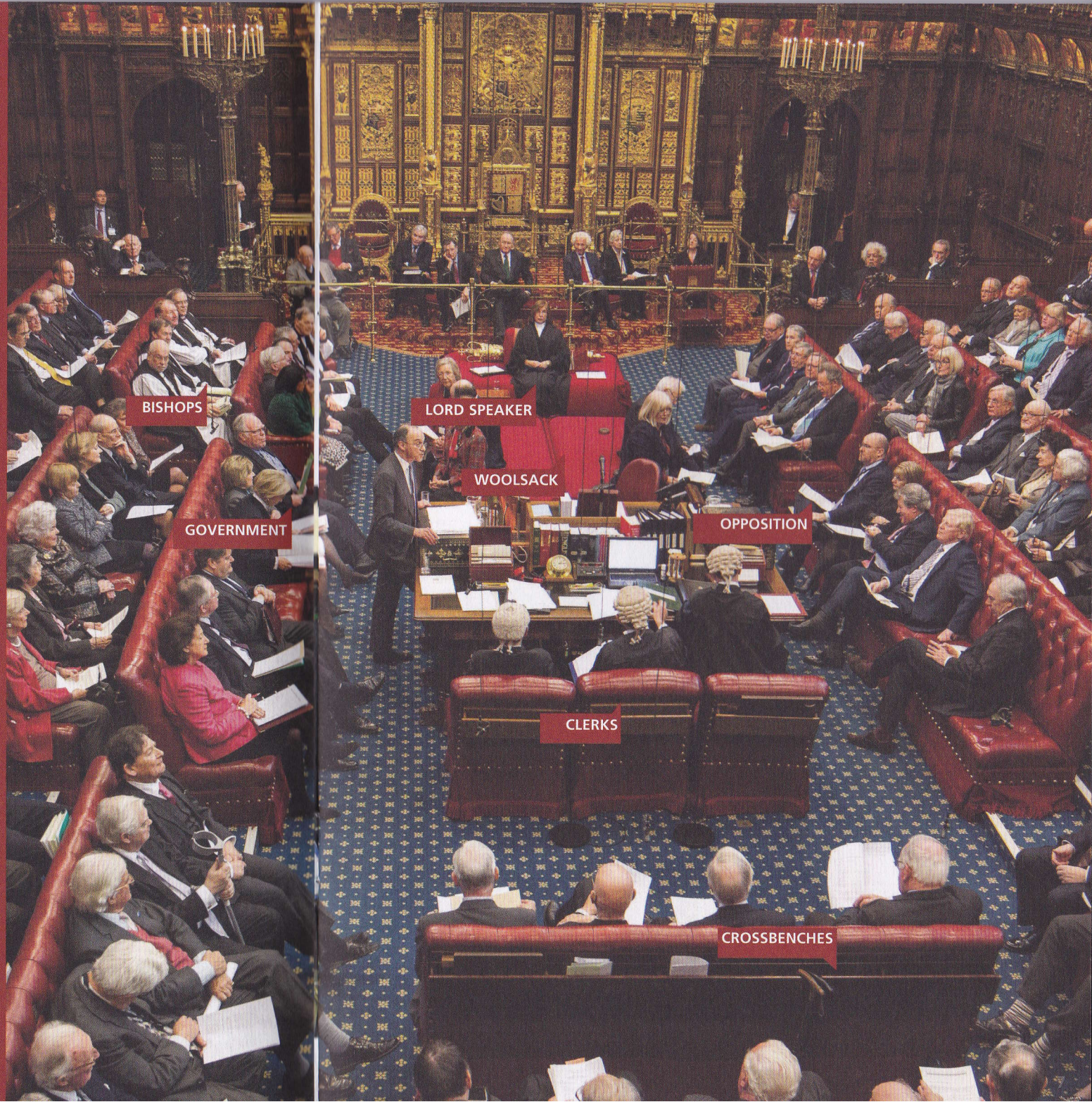
Members come from many walks of life and bring experience and knowledge from a wide range of professions to examining matters of public interest that affect all UK citizens. They work on behalf of all the people in the UK; they do not represent constituencies. A distinctive feature of the Lords is its 'crossbench' Members – these Members are independent and not members of the main party groups.



Around the Chamber

Who are Members?

Most of the House of Lords Members are life peers, appointed for their lifetime only (titles are not passed on to their family) by the Queen, on the advice of the Prime Minister. A small number are elected hereditary peers. Any eligible UK citizen can apply or be nominated to become a Member via the independent House of Lords Appointments Commission.



Making Laws

Only Parliament can create legislation that affects the whole of the UK. Any Member of Parliament can introduce a bill (draft law) but most of the bills that become law are brought to Parliament by Government Ministers.

How laws progress through Parliament

Members of both Houses get the chance to scrutinise a bill, consider its implications, debate its merits and propose and vote on any amendments.

Only once there is agreement in both Houses can a bill become law. The Queen must give her *Royal Assent* to the final text before it formally becomes an Act of Parliament. This is largely symbolic, as Royal Assent has not been withheld on any bill for more than 300 years.

