

Debating



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Aims

- To understand what is involved in parliamentary debating and why it is important.
- To try out debating, to practise debating skills, form and justify opinions and learn from others.

Success Criteria

- I can understand why debates in Parliament are so important.
- I can explain what happens during a debate in the House of Commons or the House of Lords.
- I can identify the different roles of Members and Speakers in the House of Commons or the House of Lords.
- I can take part in a debate myself and form my own opinions and arguments.

Debating

What is
a debate?

Have you ever
seen or taken part
in a debate?



What Is a Debate?

A debate is a type of discussion where people give their opinions on a topic.



Debating in Parliament



In Parliament, debating is one of the most important things members of the House of Commons and House of Lords do.

They spend a lot of their time debating what should be made into law as well as other important issues affecting the UK such as schools, hospitals and the police.

Debates in the House of Commons

A debate is based on a suggested idea called a motion. An example of a motion could be 'the voting age should be lowered to 16'.

Members who are arguing to support the motion (usually MPs belonging to the Government) are called the proposers.



Members arguing against the motion (usually the Opposition) are the opposers.

Members take it in turn to speak and there are certain rules that have to be followed.

What Are The Rules?

- A debate in the House of Commons is chaired by the Speaker, whose decision on all matters is final.
- Members should stand up to show that they would like to speak.
- When the Speaker selects someone, everyone else must sit down while the chosen Member makes his or her point.
- When the Member has finished speaking they sit down again and everyone else who wants to speak stands up again.
- Only one person may speak at a time.
- If anyone breaks the rules or the session becomes too rowdy, the Speaker will say 'Order, order', which means 'be quiet'.
- The Speaker's decision is final!



Debates in the House of Lords

Every day the House of Lords has the chance to question the Government, grilling them on their actions and decisions.

This is an important way they hold the Government to account.

They ask the Government what they are going to do about certain issues and then they debate their response.

Unlike in the House of Commons, Members asking the question don't actually ask them out loud in the Chamber. They are written down on an order paper which is published and sent out before the debate.

The House of Lords regulates itself and so, unlike the Speaker in the House of Commons, the Lord Speaker simply guides the debate and doesn't control it.

The House of Lords also has a Speaker, but the Lord Speaker's role is different to the Speaker's role in the House of Commons.

Watch a Parliamentary Debate

Let's visit [Parliament TV](https://parliamentlive.tv) to watch a real debate in Parliament!



The image is a composite. On the left, a man in a blue suit and glasses is speaking in the House of Commons, gesturing with his right hand. On the right, a screenshot of the Parliament Live TV website interface is shown. The website has a navigation bar with 'parliamentlive.tv', 'HOME', 'EVENT GUIDE', 'HELP', and 'SEARCH'. Below the navigation bar is a 'PLAYER' section with a video player showing the same man speaking. To the right of the video player is an 'AGENDA' section with a 'LIVE' button and an 'INDEX' button. The agenda lists the following items:

Time	Speaker	Party
16:49:26	Jeremy Quin MP (Horsham)	Conservative
16:41:26	Lloyd Duxhall-Moyle MP (Brighton, Kemptown)	Labour (Co-op)
16:37:09	Lucy Frazer MP (South East Cambridgeshire)	Conservative
16:30:04	Chris Bryant MP (Rhondda)	Labour
16:21:15	Stephen Hammond MP (Wimbledon)	Conservative
16:05:36	Rae Wishart MP (Perth and North Perthshire)	Scottish National Party
15:47:46	Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (South Northamptonshire)	Conservative
15:34:40	Valerie Vaz MP (Walsall South)	Labour
15:17:38	Rt Hon Mark Harper MP (Forest of Dean)	Conservative
15:04:16	Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP (Orkney and Shetland)	Liberal Democrat

Discuss the questions on the **Watch a Parliamentary Debate Activity Sheet** in your groups and feed back to the class at the end.

Plenary

You have just held a House of Commons style debate! Reflecting on your experience, think about the following questions...

How did you reach your final decision?

Did you change your mind and if so, why?

What did you think of the process and could it be improved?

Share your ideas with the class.





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