

How well do you know Parliament?

1. Parliament is divided into an upper and lower House – how are these more commonly known?
2. How many MPs sit in Parliament (within 10)?
3. How many of these are women (within 10)?
4. How many from black and minority ethnic groups (within 5)?
5. Name four categories of Lords who sit in Parliament
6. When the Government introduces legislation which House does it start off in?
7. What is the difference between a select committee and a bill committee?
8. How much time do MPs have to vote when a division is called?
9. How many General Elections have there been since the second world war?
10. Who cannot vote in a UK parliamentary election? There are five categories – one point for each one you get right.
11. What do the words guttersnipe, stoolpigeon and traitor have in common?

And if there is a tie – a bonus question:

12. When delivering the Budget what did Gladstone choose to drink?

How well do you know Parliament? – the Answers

1. Parliament is divided into an upper and lower house – how are these more commonly known?

House of Commons and House of Lords.

1 point for each correct answer.

2. How many MPs sit in Parliament (within 20)?

650 MPs were elected at the 2010 Election. For an up to date number visit www.parliament.uk

1 point if you said within 20. 2 points if you got it exactly right.

3. What percentage of these are women (within 5%)?

144 at the time of writing (April 2010), just over 22% of the total. An up to date number can be found on the Parliament website – www.parliament.uk

1 point if you said within 5%. 2 points if you got it exactly right.

4. What percentage are from black and minority ethnic groups (within 5%)?

27 at the 2010 General Election, or just over 4%.

1 point if you said within 5%. 2 points if you got it exactly right.

5. Name four categories of people who sit in the House of Lords (1 point for each category)

There are 810 at the time of writing (January 2011). This includes

- 638 Life Peers (appointed by political parties for life)
- 90 Hereditary Peers (Under a compromise agreed in 1999 the 700+ peers with hereditary titles may elect 91 from amongst their member to sit in the Lords)
- 23 Law Lords and
- 25 Bishops and Archbishops of the Church of England, known as the 'Lords Spiritual'.

For up to date figures for the House of Lords see: <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/lords/lords-by-type-and-party>

6. When the Government introduces legislation which House does it start off in?

Legislation can start in either house, and is considered in various stages – eg first reading, second reading, committee, report and third reading – before going through the same process in the other house. All legislation passes through both Houses, and can bounce backwards and forwards until agreement is reached or the House of Commons asserts its primacy, after introducing the Bill in two sessions of Parliament, through the Parliament Act.

The exception to this rule is legislation which affects the spending of money, such as the annual Finance Bill (which implements the Budget), or the Consolidated Fund Bill. These must start in the Commons, and cannot be amended by the Lords.

1 point if you said either House, or an extra 1 point if you mentioned the exception.

7. What is the difference between a select committee and a bill committee?

A Select Committee is permanent, and reviews the activities and issues relating to a particular government department (such as the Defence Select Committee or the Health Select Committee). A Bill Committee is temporary, and is convened to scrutinise and discuss one particular Bill. Once its job has been done it is dissolved.

1 point if you said Select Committees are permanent and Bill Committees are temporary. 1 point if you said Select Committees review government departments and Bill Committees scrutinise proposed legislation.

8. How much time do MPs have to vote when a division is called?

From the moment of a division – a vote to say yes or no to a particular motion – MPs have eight minutes to make their way to voting lobbies on either side of the Commons chamber. After eight minutes the doors are locked. If MPs are not in the chamber at the time of the division, they are alerted by ringing bells and notices on TV monitors situated around the Houses of Parliament, in Ministers’ offices in their Departments (all within 5 minutes of the Palace of Westminster) and – believe it or not – in the Red Lion pub in Whitehall. MPs all carry electronic pagers and are alerted on those as well.

1 point if you said eight minutes.

9. How many General Elections have there been since the Second World War?

18.

Year	Prime Minister	Party	Year	Prime Minister	Party
1945	Clement Attlee	Labour	Oct 1974	Harold Wilson	Labour
1950	Clement Attlee	Labour	1979	Margaret Thatcher	Conservative
1951	Winston Churchill	Conservative	1983	Margaret Thatcher	Conservative
1955	Anthony Eden	Conservative	1987	Margaret Thatcher	Conservative
1959	Harold Macmillan	Conservative	1992	John Major	Conservative
1964	Harold Wilson	Labour	1997	Tony Blair	Labour
1966	Harold Wilson	Labour	2001	Tony Blair	Labour
1970	Edward Heath	Conservative	2005	Tony Blair	Labour
Feb 1974	Harold Wilson	Labour	2010	David Cameron / Nick Clegg	Coalition

2 points if you said 18, 1 point if you said 16 - 20

10. Who cannot vote in a UK parliamentary election?

- People under 18 years old
- Foreign nationals (apart from citizens of the Irish Republic and Commonwealth countries resident in Britain)
- Members of the House of Lords (The Queen can vote but it is considered unconstitutional to do so)
- Sentenced prisoners
- People convicted within the previous five years of illegal election practices

1 point for each category of people disqualified from voting (total of five points)

11. What do the words guttersnipe, stoolpigeon and traitor have in common?

Speakers have at one time judged them all to be “unparliamentarily language” and therefore they cannot be used in parliamentary exchanges.

1 point if you got this right.

And the tie-breaker:

12. When delivering the Budget what did Gladstone choose to drink?

Sherry and a beaten egg.

Alcohol is not normally allowed in the chamber of the House of Commons, though by tradition the Chancellor of the Exchequer has the right to drink whatever he likes when delivering his speech (up until now it has always been a man).

Gladstone’s rival Benjamin Disraeli was said to have taken brandy with water when he made his budget speeches. Geoffrey Howe took Gin and Tonic, Kenneth Clarke sipped Glenfaclas scotch. Gordon Brown delighted Highland Spring Mineral Water Company by choosing a well-known Scottish brand. The current Chancellor, Alistair Darling, is reported to have stuck with simple London tap water.