

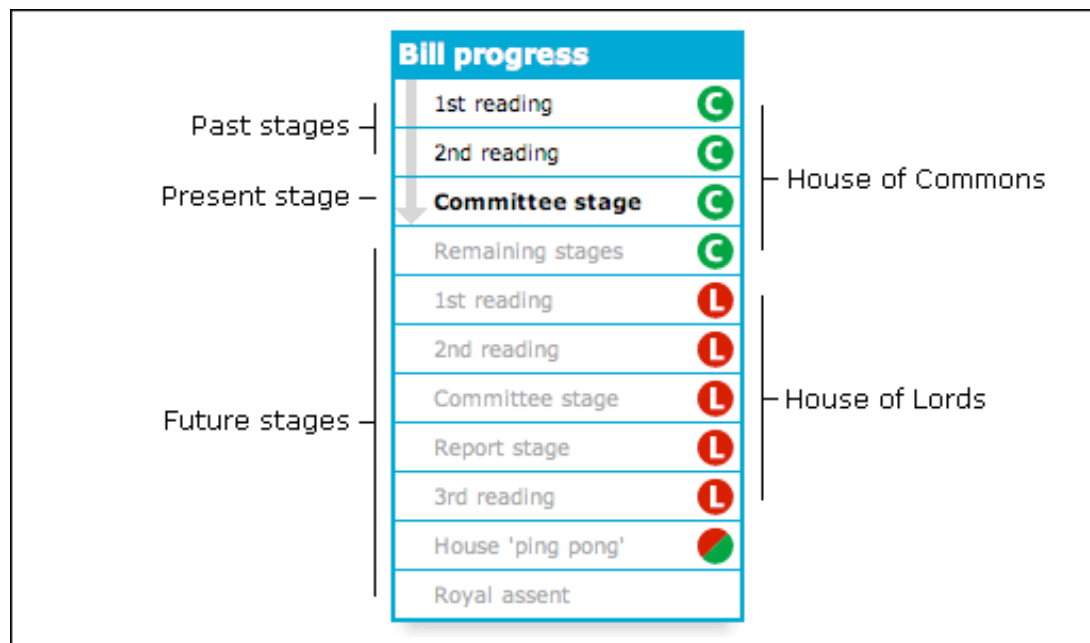
The Christian Institute

How Westminster makes laws

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[Click here for the stages in more detail](#)

Bill progress key (example shown)



The stages in detail

When a new piece of legislation is proposed in Parliament it is known as a 'Bill'. It must be agreed by both Houses (the Commons and the Lords) and receive Royal Assent before it becomes law and is known as an 'Act'. This process is commonly known as 'the legislative process'.

There are various stages in each House of Parliament for passing a Bill. These stages are largely similar, although there are some differences. A Bill can be introduced in either the House of Commons or House of Lords. The following outlines the stages of a Bill:

1. First Reading

This is a formality to seek permission to introduce and print the Bill. There is no debate at this stage.

2. Second Reading

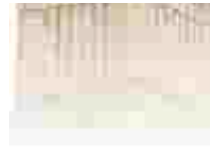
Usually two weeks after the First Reading, this is the main opportunity to debate the general principles of the Bill. A vote can be held on the Bill as a whole, but not on specific parts of it.

3. Committee Stage

Normally in the Commons a specific group of MPs studies a Bill in detail. This usually starts two weeks after the Second Reading and can last from one



meeting to up to several months. Amendments can be made. At Committee Stage in the Lords, any Peer can participate.



4. Report Stage

This usually takes place two weeks after the Committee Stage. It allows the whole House to further consider the detail of the Bill, along with any amendments or new clauses from Committee Stage. New amendments can be added.

5. Third Reading

In the Commons this usually happens immediately after Report Stage (when this happens Report Stage and Third Reading are referred to together as the Remaining Stages). Third Reading is a final chance to debate the Bill as a whole and decide whether or not to pass it. In the Lords amendments can be tabled on Third Reading.

6. The other House

Once a Bill has completed all the stages in one House, it is passed to the other House. If there is disagreement between Houses, Parliamentary 'ping-pong' can ensue until one House gives way or a compromise is reached. The unelected House of Lords tends to give way to the elected Commons, though this depends on the strength of opposition in the Lords for a given Bill.

7. Royal Assent

If the Bill completes all its stages in both Houses, it is then sent to the Queen to give 'Royal Assent'. This is a formality. The Bill is then law, and becomes an Act of Parliament.

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