

AQA Citizenship (9-1)

Politics and Participation Revision Guide

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Political Power in the UK

The UK as a democracy

What is a democracy?


The UK hasn't always had a fair democracy for example until 1870 women were unable to vote. People today still work to campaign to change our democratic society in the UK. For example; it is debated whether the voting age should be lowered to 16.

A democracy is: a government system where its people get a choice of whom is responsible for taking charge of a countries political system. The citizens are able to do this through a fair and open voting system.

The UK is a **Liberal Democracy** this means that the UK citizens have freedoms to choose who represents them as we are part of a **representative democracy** which is the idea that people eg. Councillors/ MPS are elected by people to represent the views of the citizens in the UK

Regular elections
that are fair

A secret ballot



In a
democracy
there
should be

All citizens can stand
for election

People have the right to
campaign if they're unhappy

The judiciary (legal system) is
separate from the government

The media is allowed to report
freely on elections. The
government cannot restrict
material that is being shown

A dictatorship in opposition to a democracy is where there's no government and one person/ party are in power/ control. For example: North Korea

Case Study

The Values underpinning democracy

Rights: What you are entitled to eg. The right to life/ safety etc.
Responsibilities: The things you have to or are required to do eg. Respect all life/ follow laws.
Freedoms: Your ability to speak/ think/act

There have been a variety of acts created by the government that aim to ensure that people's rights/ responsibilities and freedoms are respected in society for example;

Rights of women have been protected by the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975

Racial equality has been protected by the Race Relations Acts 2000

The Institutions of the British Constitution

In simple terms a constitution is how something is formed so the Institutions of the British Constitution refers to the parts that make up the UK its democratic society and government.

The three parts of the British Constitution explained:

The monarchy: This refers to the hereditary power passed down in a family line. In the UK we have what is called a constitutional monarchy where the head of the state is the monarch (king or queen) but their powers have been passed on to the government in power. The queen is more of a role model in society today. Some of her duties include:

Royal visits and representation of the UK

Signing off new legislation

The legislature: The group of people that decide on laws (legislation). The two chambers of Parliament in the UK (The House of Lords and House of Commons) are known as the legislature because it is in **parliament** that laws are debated and discussed. Parliament in the UK is a **bicameral** (this means that there are two chambers (or parts) to Parliament).

The executive government is the name given to the group of people that put law into action. The members of the **civil service** are employed by the state to administer its policies. E.g. judges in court/ Police etc.

If you work for the civil service there are rules you have to follow:

Impartiality: You cannot be a member of a particular political party (eg. Labour/ Conservative/ UKIP)

Anonymity: You should keep anonymous and not link yourself to any of the policies or laws created.

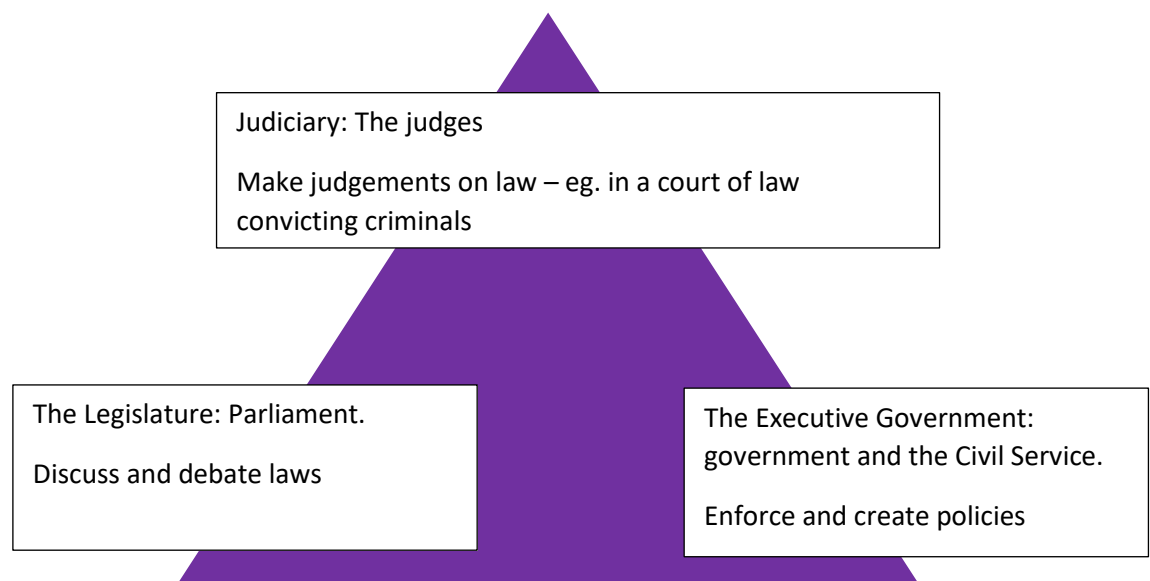
Permanence: Civil servants keep their job roles even when a government leaves office and new government are placed in power

The British Constitution is uncodified

The UK has what is called an unwritten or uncodified constitution. What this means is that in the UK the Constitution is more flexible to create and make new laws. So allowing same sex marriage/ lowering a voting age etc. can be changed by following normal procedures to change laws in Parliament. This differs in the USA. In the USA there's a clearly written constitution which means that it isn't as easy for laws etc. to be changed

Separation of Powers

This phrase simply means how the UK government is divided. The UK government has three main sections and each group have their own role. Like in a school you have different levels of responsibility and roles eg. A head teacher to make big decisions/ Heads of Year to help with the running of year groups and classroom teachers to teach their subjects.



TASK- 2 points for and 2 points against the constitution being codified

Local and devolved government

Key terms **Local Government** means your local council. As opposed to **central government** which is Parliament.

Devolution is the word used to describe how power is given from central government to local government. Devolution means that councils can make their own decisions about their local area with the money/ guidance given from central government.

Local Authorities – The UK is divided into areas called Local Authorities.

Some of the responsibilities of the Local Government are:

- Collecting rubbish bins
- Services for the disabled
- Libraries
- Community events
- Maintaining roads
- Car parking
- Taxation
- Planning permission for new houses/ buildings

How does a council work?

Local people elect councillors to represent a local area (ward). This happens every four years.

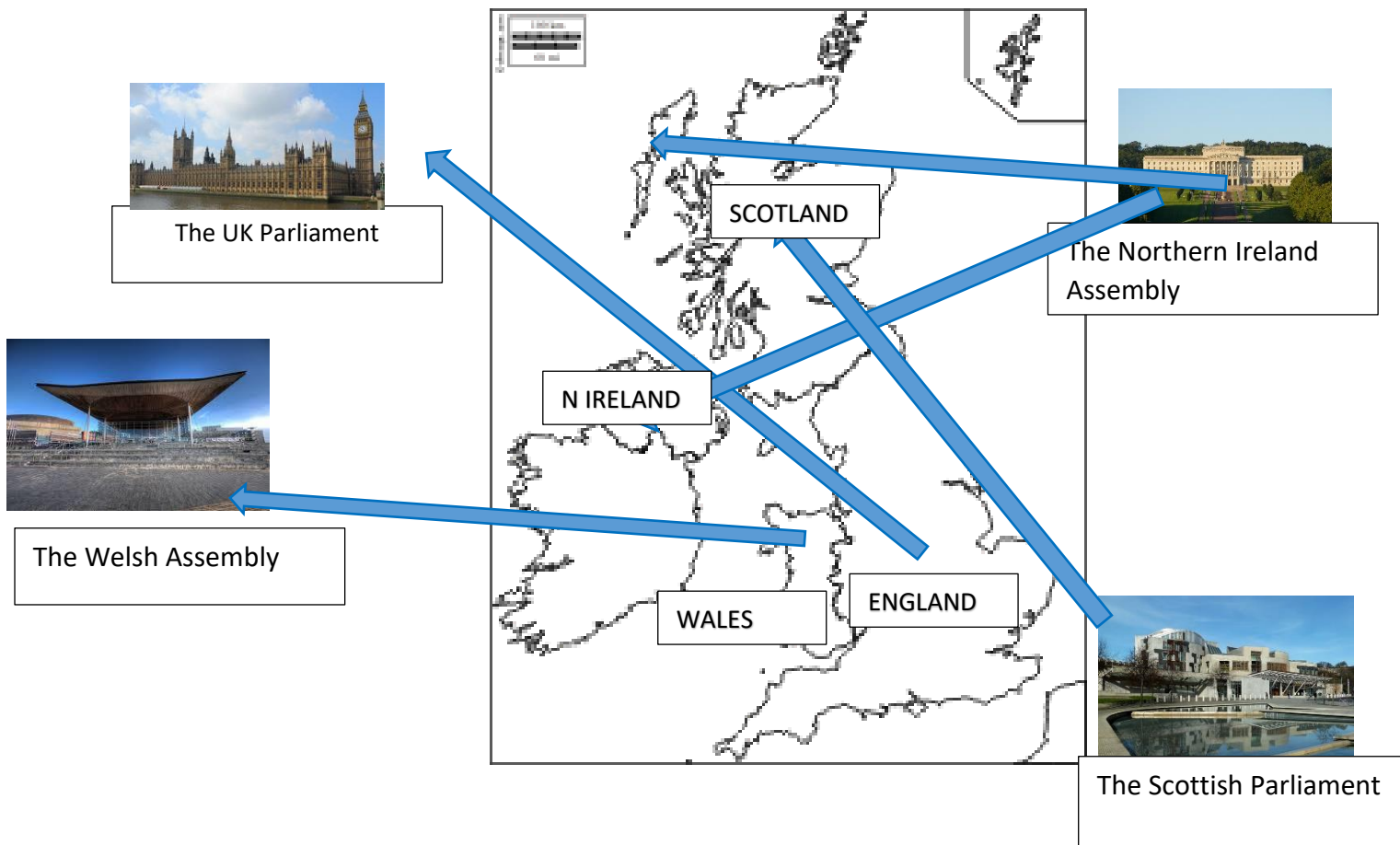
Councillors usually belong to a political party therefore when making decisions in the local community they have to think about their party's policies and local citizens' needs.

There are different groups/roles in the council. Having three groups ensures that the council is working well.

1. **Full council:** Elected councillors are part of this group. This group of people discuss and debate reports and policies.
2. **Committees:** Watch and report on the councillor's actions and decisions. This means that if councillors make bad decisions then they can be held responsible for their actions/ choices. Councillors should not work outside the powers they have been given. If they do this is called '**Ultra Vires**'
3. **Cabinet:** Like in central government councillors have a series of people that work on separate areas eg. People are elected to watch over education/ NHS etc.
4. **Leader or elected Mayor** – This is the person elected to watch over and be in charge of the council

The nature and organisation of regional and devolved government

Central Government: Parliament has the greatest power and passes power on to the other areas within the UK's nation. The below diagram shows each Parliament in the UK.



Why do some people not agree with devolution of power?

Each parliament has a different set of powers. The powers are decided upon by Westminster Parliament. Scotland voted in its own referendum to be able to set its own tax-raising powers this has meant that Scotland has a higher level of power to pass its own laws whereas in Wales there are less powers. This has meant that some people disagree with devolution because they think it is an unfair system and argue that all governments should have the same rights, freedoms and powers.

Elections and voting in the UK

Who can stand for election and how are candidates selected?

Who can be a candidate in a local election?

1. You must be registered elector with your local council.
2. You have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises within the local council area for at least 12 months.
3. Your place of work for the last 12 months is in the local council

You cannot stand for election as councillor if:

1. You are employed by the local authority
2. If you are bankrupt
3. If you have been sentenced a term of imprisonment of three months or more.

Who can stand for election to be an MP?

Be at least 18 years old

Be a British Citizen

You cannot stand to be an MP if:

You are a civil servant

Are a member of the police force

Member of the armed forces

A judge

You have family/ friends in the House of Lords

Who can and cannot vote in an election and why?

Allowed to vote	Not allowed to vote
<p>You need to:</p> <p>Be registered</p> <p>Over 18</p> <p>A British Citizen</p>	<p>You cannot be:</p> <p>A member of the House of Lords</p> <p>EU citizen resident in the UK</p> <p>In prison</p> <p>Found guilty with causing corruption in any legal processes</p> <p>Detained under the Mental Health Act</p>

There have been many debates historically over who should have the right to vote for example women were only given the right to vote in 1918. Since then people have debated whether the voting age should be lowered to 16. 16 year olds are currently allowed to vote in their local council elections.

The problems with 'voter apathy' and 'voter turnout'

Voter Turnout: Is the phrase used to mean how many people turn up to vote in an election

Voter apathy: is a phrase that means people have a lack of interest in voting (why should I bother? I couldn't care less. It doesn't affect me!)

The Problem	The solutions?
<p>Voter Turnout: The issue is that it is decreasing. People do not seem as bothered about politics (voter apathy) anymore. However some say that interest in pressure groups etc. are increasing.</p>	<p>In Scotland more people voted when 16 year olds were given the chance to vote in council elections – does this mean the voting age should be lowered?</p> <p>The Electoral Commission (the group that monitor voting in the UK) have tried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekend voting Change of polling hours Opening more polling stations

Encouraging postal votes

How money is raised?

The government raise money through different forms of taxation:

National Insurance Paid by everyone under 65	Corporation Tax Companies pay this based on their profits	Council Tax Paid to your local council based upon the area and where you live
VAT (Value Added Tax) This is added to the goods you buy	Income Tax Paid by everyone earning above a certain amount of money	

The UK can also borrow money

Every year the Chancellor of the Exchequer (the person elected in Parliament to talk about government money/ spending) gives an annual budget (a statement that talks about how the government will raise and spend money for the following year). The Exchequer then writes what is called an **Autumn Statement** which explains the decisions made.

How is money spent?

Money is spent by the government on areas such as:

The NHS

Education

Defence

Social Protection

Housing

Transport

Debt/ Interest

Employment

Decisions about spending and changes the government have made

When voting in a general election the candidates often give a statement called a manifesto. In this they explain what areas they will help and spend money on. The party in power in government have to make choices that will keep their promises in their manifestos and also help the country's economy.

In the UK we have a welfare state this means that money is spent to protect peoples health/ happiness and wealth. Some of the benefits people receive are:

- Incapacity benefit if they are unable to work/ look after themselves
- Housing benefit for example if people cannot afford to live
- Child benefit to help with looking after dependent children
- A pension – when you are too old to go out and earn a full wage

Over the last few years prices have inflated (Inflation means the increase of wages and prices). This has been a result of people living longer. The government are having to spend more money on pensions/ healthcare etc. The pension age has also increased as a result of people living longer in an attempt to save government money. The issue is how much should the government invest in each area? Tough decisions have to be made. For example: Should people be given benefits? Should the government make budget cuts to education? Etc.

Voting in the UK

Please note: This theme links back to the first topic. Look back to the first page of this revision guide to refresh upon what it means to be a democracy.

In the UK every constituency is represented by a local MP (Member of Parliament). You will learn more about the role of an MP later on ...

MPs have to be voted for in a general election. The UK will have an election every five years. In the UK dates for the next election are fixed. The only time this may change is if an MP dies or resigns the election that takes place is called a **'by-election'**.

What is First Past the Post?

The voting system used in the UK is called **'First Past the Post'** (the person with highest number of votes wins).

How do people vote?

1. Citizens will visit their local polling station and will fill in a ballot paper. A **ballot paper** is a piece of paper with the list of candidate names.



2. The voter will need to select one person they would like to be elected.



3. The ballot must be secretive so is placed straight in the ballot box ready to be counted.

Other voting systems used in the UK

Along with the **positives** and **negatives** of each

Proportional Representation

We do not currently use this system for General Elections in the UK.

Explanation of what happens:

With proportional representation, the electorate votes for whichever party they prefer. The number of seats given to each party reflects the percentage of citizens who voted for each party across the country as a whole.

If the House of Commons has 600 members, this means that if the Green party got 10% of the vote 60 seats would be Green.

Close Party List

This happens in EU Parliament

Voters vote for a party on a list. The number of votes gained by the party determines how many of their members are elected.

Positive: The votes are often fairer in giving the right amount of seats to each party

Negative: The voter has no choice regarding the order of the candidates in the party list

Single Transferable Vote

Voters place candidates in order of preference (rank them) Each candidate must have a certain amount of votes to win.

Positive: Every vote helps elect someone

Negative: Results can take a long time to count

Supplementary vote

A voting system used in the UK where voters have a second vote which election process if no candidate gets 50% of the first-choice votes

Rank any number of options in your order of preference.

- Joe Smith
- 1** John Citizen
- 3** Jane Doe
- Fred Rubble
- 2** Mary Hill

Positive: Ensures the winner has over 50%

Negative: The winner often relies on people's second choice

The concept of a bicameral parliament

In UK parliament there are two chambers: The House of Lords and House of Commons this is called a bicameral parliament. The roles of each chamber of Parliament are explained in the table below:

House of Lords	House of Commons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check on the House of Commons and make sure laws are not rushed.• Criticise the government if it thinks that it has become too powerful.• Hold debates on important issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make laws• Examine the work of the Government by asking questions and having debates.• Keep a check on government spending.• Represent their constituencies and the interests of their people

Who works in the House of Lords and House of Commons?

It is important to know that the way people are elected for each chamber is different.

The House of Lords

All of the members are unelected (this means the citizens of the UK do not vote who goes into the House of Lords). They are nominated experts in their fields. The Prime Minister has a large say in who becomes a member in The House of Lords.

The House of Commons

All of the MPs elected by UK citizens in the general election. Each represents their own constituency.

Is it good to have two chambers in the UK parliament?

Some people believe that having two chambers is a good system because the House of Lords are there to hold the House of Commons to account if they make any mistakes/ wrong decisions etc. However, others say it makes procedures lengthy for example the process of creating a new law can take a very long time.

There have also been debates about the people that make up the House of Lords and House of Commons. It seems unfair that we live in democracy and the people that work in the House of Lord are unelected.

Solutions to change the UK's bicameral parliament

Have a fully appointed House of Lords

A fully appointed House would remove the remainder of the hereditary peers leaving just Members of the Lords appointed by a body like the current House of Lords Appointments Commission which appoints the non-party political Crossbench Members of the House.

Supporters say

- It doesn't threaten the democratic supremacy of the House of Commons.
- Appointment is more cost effective than election.

Opponents say

- It is undemocratic to have unelected Members of the Lords involved in drafting and passing legislation.
- The UK is the only country in the world – with the exception of Canada, that has an unelected second chamber.
- A more democratic system is worth investing in.

Fully elected

Every Member of the Lords would have to win their place in the House of Lords through an election.

Have a mix of appointed and hereditary members in the House of Lords

A mixture of elected and appointed Members of the Lords, potentially through a 70% - 30% split)

Supporters say

- It combines the best of both fully appointed and fully elected systems: addressing the democratic deficit while retaining individuals with expertise and experience in valuable fields.
- The House of Commons would retain its democratic supremacy.
- It would be a more straightforward system to introduce.

Opponents say

- It is undemocratic to retain any unelected Members of the Lords.
- It will create a two-tier House of Lords of elected and non-elected Members causing friction.
- The system would cause additional confusion both within and without Parliament as to where power does and should lie.

Major Political Parties

Below are listed the major political parties of the UK. Each party will have their own values/ manifesto. Below is an example of some of the parties' manifestos upon the 'Welfare State'

Political Party
Labour
Conservative
Liberal Democrats
Green Party
SNP: Scottish National Party

Welfare



The **Conservatives** will means test winter fuel payments for the elderly, while, in order to make the social care system sustainable, the value of someone's property will now be included in the **means test for care in their own home**.

Labour will maintain the **pension triple lock** and benefits for pensioners, including the winter fuel allowance.

The **Lib Dems** will **scrap the benefits freeze** and reverse cuts to a number of benefits and entitlements.

The **SNP** will keep the pensions triple lock and **protect winter fuel payments** for all.

The **Greens, Ukip and Plaid Cymru** will all **abolish the so-called bedroom tax** and protect the triple-lock on pensions.

How Parliament Works



There are different roles (jobs) within Parliament to ensure it all runs successfully

The Lord Speaker

In the House of Lords the responsibility is for the Lord Speaker to chair debates and control what happens

The Black Rod

Appointed by the Lord Great Chamberlain, Black Rod is responsible for and participates in the major ceremonial events in the Palace of Westminster.



He is also responsible for the Queen's residual estate in the Palace (eg the Robing Room and the Royal Gallery).

Ceremonial duties: State Opening

Black Rod's role at the State Opening of Parliament is one of the most well-known images of Parliament.

Black Rod is sent from the Lords Chamber to the Commons Chamber to summon MPs to hear the Queen's Speech. Traditionally the door of the Commons is slammed in Black Rod's face to symbolise the Commons independence.

He then bangs three times on the door with the rod. The door to the Commons Chamber is then opened and all MPs – talking loudly – follow Black Rod back to the Lords to hear the Queen's Speech



The Serjeant of Arms

The formal role of a modern legislative bodies

meetings, and, if necessary, forcibly remove any members or guests who are overly rowdy or disruptive. A serjeant-at-arms may thus be a retired soldier, police officer, or other official *with experience in security*.

serjeant-at-arms in is to keep order during

Whips

Every week, whips send out a notice (called 'The Whip') to their MPs or Lords detailing upcoming parliamentary business. Special attention is paid to divisions (where members vote on debates), which are ranked in order of importance by the number of times they are underlined.

Clerk of Parliament

The Clerk of Parliament:

1. Employs staff in the Lords
2. Deals with accounts
3. Keeps official records of membership
4. Ensures that the writing in Acts are correct

The Speaker

They chair debates. They interpret the rules of the house and have the power to bar members if they become unruly

Front Benchers and Back Benchers

Ministers and shadow ministers sit on the front row of the seats in either the House of Representatives or the Senate. That is why they are referred to as frontbenchers. Backbenchers are members of parliament who are not ministers or shadow ministers; they sit in the rows of seats behind the frontbench.



Questions and answers about how Parliament works

Question Time

What is question time?

The Prime Minister answers a series of questions from MPs

When does Question Time happen?

It happens at 2.35pm on Mondays and 11.35 on Tuesdays.

When does each department get chance to have a go?

They get a particular day allocated to ask.

Who asks the first question?

The official opposition

How do MPs get a chance to ask questions?

They place their names in order on a list

How many questions can be asked?

Six

Select Committees

What are the main areas that the select committees in the House of Lords look after?

Five main areas: science, economics, communications, Europe and UK Constitution

What do select committees do?

They draft laws

Debates

What is a debate?

This is where MPs and Lords discuss current issues and affairs and try to make new policies and laws

Who is the Prime Minister?

What is the role of the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister:

- Leads government and directs government policy.
- Chooses Cabinet Ministers and chairs the Cabinet.
- Is the head of the armed forces.
- Appoints senior judges and archbishops in the Church of England.
- Represents the nation in international affairs.

The Cabinet:

- The PM chooses a group of MPs to help run the country. This group is called the Cabinet.
- The Cabinet are the most important MPs. They get put in charge of the big departments such as:
 - The Foreign Office (relations with other countries).
 - The Home Office (law and order, police and courts)
 - Health (hospitals, doctors and nurses)
- The Cabinet works with the PM to decide the governments major policies.
-

What does an MP do?

Working in Parliament

When Parliament is sitting (meeting), MPs generally spend their time working in the House of Commons.

This can include raising issues affecting their constituents, attending debates and voting on new laws.

Most MPs are also members of committees, which look at issues in detail. from government policy and

Working in their constituency

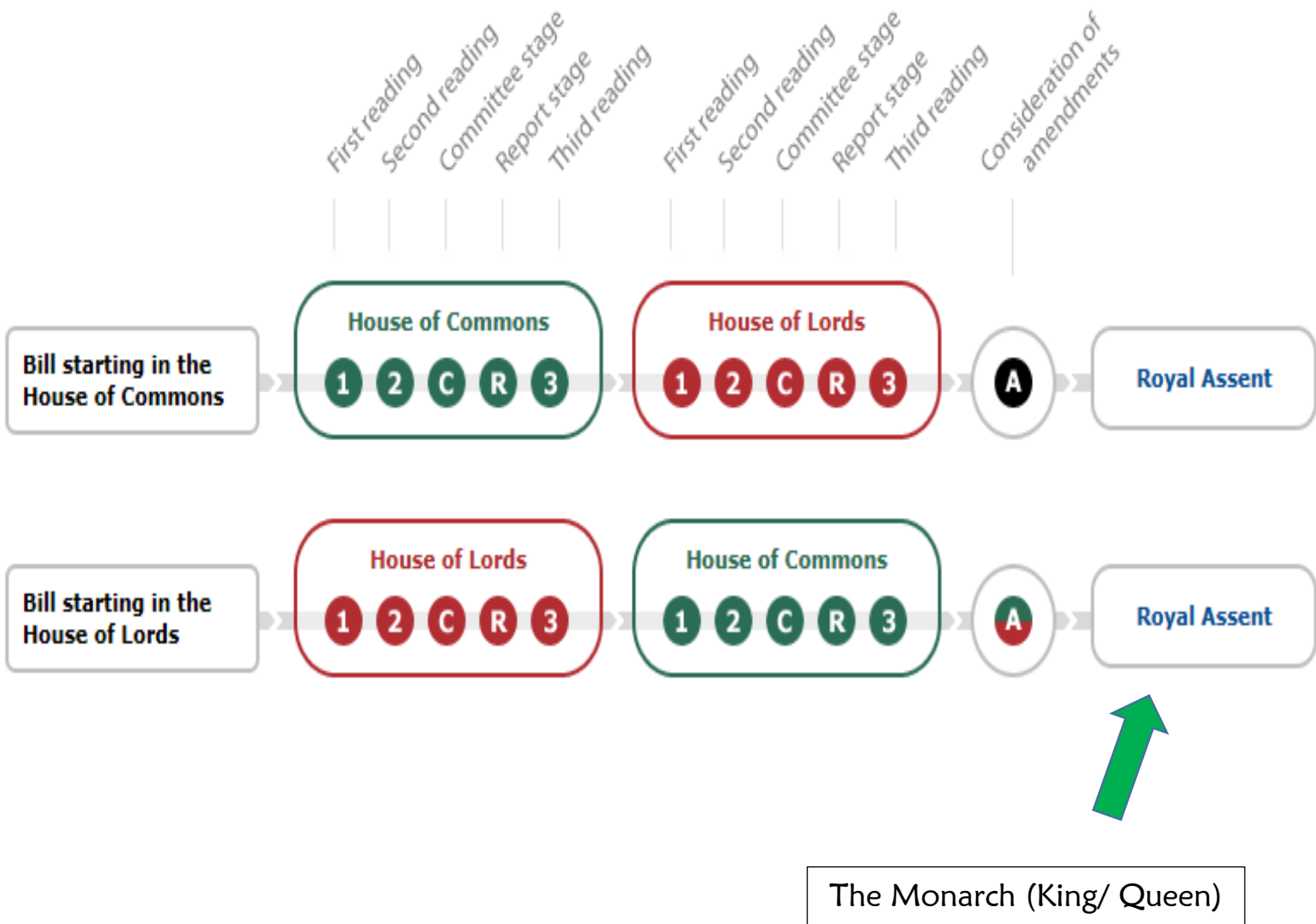
In their constituency, MPs often hold a 'surgery' in their office, where local people can come along to discuss any matters that concern them.

MPs also attend functions, visit schools and businesses and generally try to meet as many people as possible.

This gives MPs further insight and context into issues they may discuss when they return to Westminster.

The Legislative Process (Making Laws)

Passage of a Bill



A bill is the name given to a draft law before it becomes legislation.

The bill has to pass through a variety of procedures.

The bill is checked by the House of Commons and House of Lords. Each house can amend and change the bill until an agreement is reached. If an agreement cannot be reached the House of Commons have the power to choose what happens

