

# HOW AN IDEA BECOMES A LAW



An **idea** emerges. This may come from the Government, MPs and Peers, a think tank, the media, pressure groups, a piece of research or something that has happened recently.



The Government sets out its plans in a **Green Paper**.

**GREEN PAPER**

There should then be a **Consultation** period (minimum 3 months). This is a chance to talk to people who might be affected by the plans, an opportunity for Non- Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to express their views, and a chance to tell Government what you think of its ideas. Changes may be made as a result.



**WHITE PAPER**

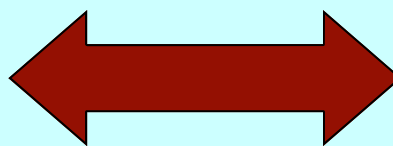
The Government will then produce a **White Paper**. This is a firmer plan of what is intended for the Bill. It is less likely that changes will be made at this stage.

Some Bills do not go through the above stages.

The **Bill** will then go to **Parliament**. It follows a number of stages in the **House of Commons** and the **House of Lords**. After it has been through all of the stages in one House, it must go through them again in the other House. A Bill can start in either the House of Lords or the House of Commons, apart from Finance Bills – these always start in the Commons.



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**



**HOUSE OF LORDS**

## The procedure that a Bill goes through in Parliament

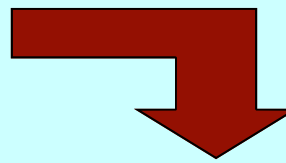
**Second reading** – the Minister in charge introduces the Bill and the main ideas of the Bill are debated. The Bill will be voted on. If it is voted against it doesn't go any further through Parliament, otherwise it goes to Committee Stage.



**Committee stage** – in the Commons, a Committee of MPs of all parties will look at the Bill. The proportion of MPs on the Committee from each political party represents the proportion of the Commons as a whole. The Committee will look at the Bill in detail, suggest amendments and add new clauses. The Bill will be voted on. At Committee stage in the Lords the whole House looks at the Bill. Sometimes in the Lords there is a Grand Committee, normally for less controversial Bills. This happens away from the main chamber, so that other things can be debated at the same time.



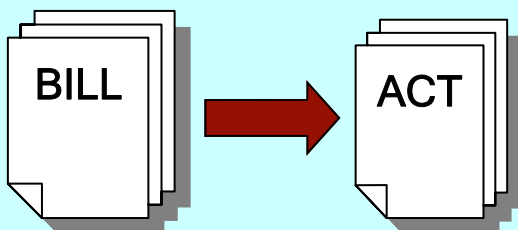
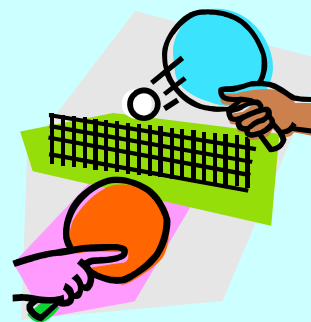
**Report stage** – this is a chance to formally reintroduce the amended Bill to the House. More amendments can be made at this stage. If the whole House disagrees with the Committee's amendments, it can be sent back.



**Third reading** – it is very rare to have a vote at this stage. There are also no amendments or debates in the Commons. This stage is a chance to get an overview of the Bill before it goes to the other House. In the Lords, amendments can only be made if the issue has not been voted on earlier.



**Passage through other house** – the Bill will follow exactly the same stages as it did in the first House. If any changes are made to the Bill in the second House, the Bill has to go back to the House where it started so that there can be a vote on the changes. This stage is sometimes referred to as "Ping pong"!



Once the Bill has completed all the stages in Parliament it will receive **Royal Assent** from the Queen. The Bill then becomes a **law** and will be known as an **Act of Parliament**. Sometimes there is a delay between Royal Assent and the Act coming in to force.

