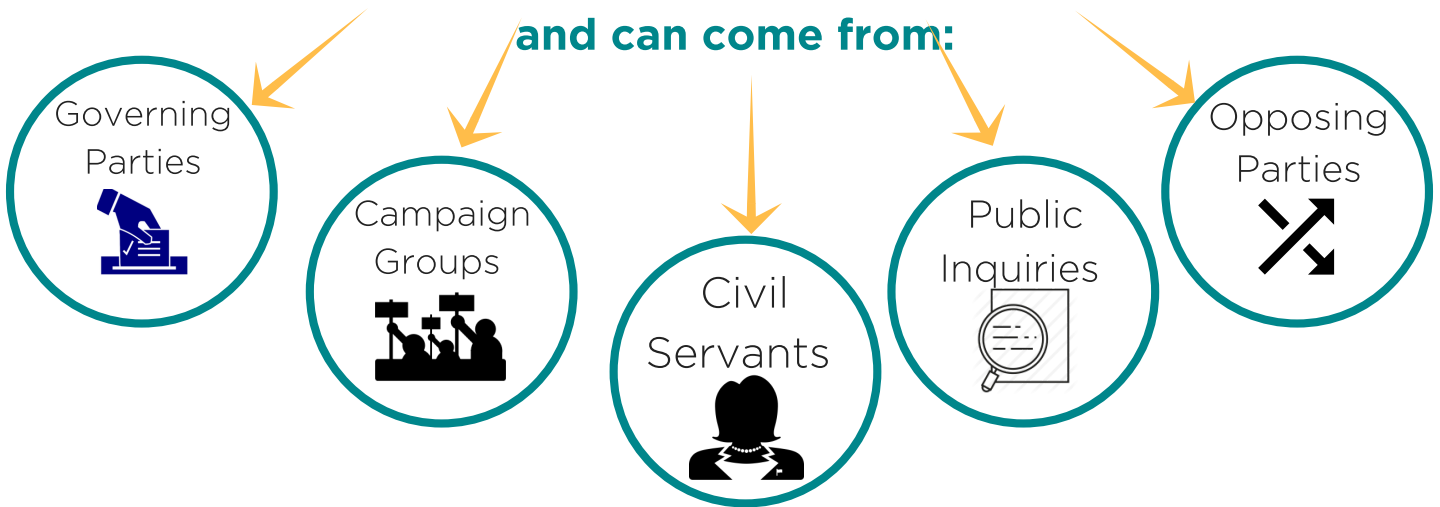


How Are Laws Made

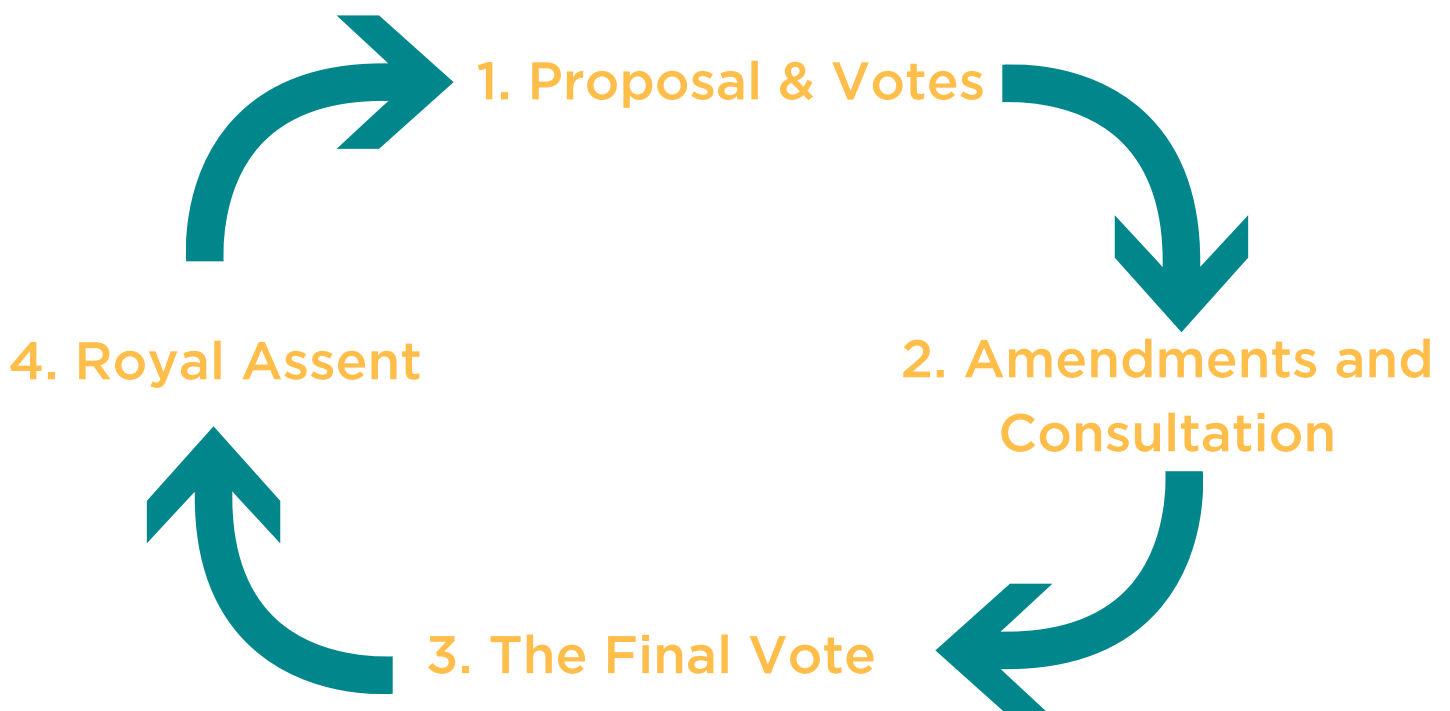
There are two ways to make or change laws in the UK - through Parliament and through the courts.

How Laws Are Made In Parliament

A proposal for a new law or to change existing one is called a **Bill** and can come from:



There are Four Steps To Making or Changing a Law

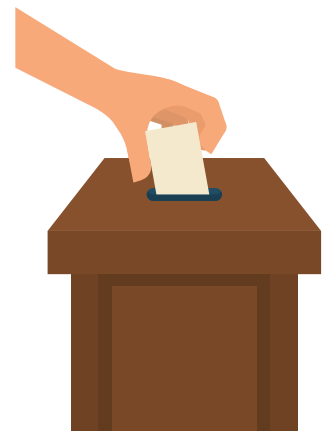


1. Proposal & Votes

A new idea for a law can be put forward by any individual or group in the House of Lords or the House of Commons.

Firstly the person introduces their idea and says why they think it is important.

Members of the House can then ask questions, suggest changes, and say if they agree or disagree with the idea for the new law. If enough people vote to say they think it is a good idea, it moves on to the next stage. If most people vote against the idea, it is thrown away.



2. Amendments and Consultation

A group of MPs and Lords meet to go through every word and detail in the new law, and they can make changes or amendments discuss the idea. There are votes on all amendments and changes.



Once a bill is acceptable to everyone in one of the houses, it then goes to the other house to start the same process again. If any changes are made then the bill has to be looked at again by both the houses of parliament until everyone is happy with the wording and can make a final vote.

At this point there is often a period of consultation where individuals and groups can get their voices heard - either by using the consultation tools the government offers, or by making some noise.

3. The Final Vote

Both Houses of Parliament make a final vote on the new law. If both houses vote to say they agree with the new law it will move to the final stage. If most people disagree with the law and vote against it, it is thrown out. If the two houses cannot agree on a law, the House of Commons get the final say as they are elected.

Note: Usually people from different political parties vote the same way as the other MPs in their group, and this can make it difficult for a government to get new laws passed, especially if they won an election, but not by so many voted. Then, they have to persuade people from the other parties to vote with them.



4. Royal Assent

The final stage is that the new law, called a bill, is sent to the Queen for Royal Assent. When she signs the bill, the law becomes active.

How does the law affect your issue?

You may want to start looking at what the law says about your issue.

For instance if you are campaigning to stop trees being cut down in your town - you could look at what legal environmental protections there are in your area and if there have been legal cases in the past to protect nature and wildlife where you live.

How Laws Are Made Through the Courts

When a legal case is brought to court, a judge or team of judges has to decide what the law means in a particular situation.

When the judge makes a decision in a case, their judgment and reasoning can affect decisions in future similar cases - this is called case law.

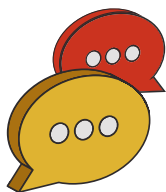
In new situations, where new laws are being used for the first time, or something has happened that has never happened before, the court case is known as a test case. What happens in that situation, and how the judge interprets the law has an impact on future cases. Case law and test cases can be very useful to campaigners.

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How you can get involved in making, shaping or changing laws:

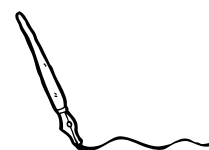
1. You can show there is public support or opposition to a new law



3. You can write to any MP or Lord and ask them to propose a new law or change an existing law



2. You can take part in consultations on new laws and say how you think it will effect you and people in your community



4. Depending on the situation, you can work with others to take a case to court (a test case) or to start a judicial review