



In Focus

Tabling of Lords Parliamentary Questions

Procedure

The [Companion to the Standing Orders](#) of the House of Lords states that “oral questions [...] are asked for information only, and not with a view to stating an opinion, making a speech or raising a debate”. The procedure for tabling oral parliamentary questions is as follows:

- oral questions may be tabled up to four weeks, including recesses and non-sitting days, in advance of the date on which they are to be asked (eg a question to be asked on Monday 31 March may not be tabled before Monday 3 March);
- oral questions are accepted by the Table Office (or the Duty Clerk in recesses) from 2pm on the day on which they become available;
- no oral question may be tabled less than 24 hours before the start of the sitting at which it is due to be asked (or after 2.30pm on Friday for Monday);
- the number of oral questions is limited to four;
- no Member of the House may have more than one oral question on the order paper at any one time, but topical questions and Secretary of State’s questions are excluded from this rule;
- no Member of the House may table more than seven oral questions in each year running from 1 May to 30 April;
- when oral questions become available, priority in tabling them is afforded to Members in person, followed by Members telephoning the Table Office in person; questions are offered to Members who have contacted the Table Office via email, or whose questions have been brought in by others, from 2.15 p.m.

(House of Lords, *Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords*, 2015, p 96)

The fourth space for an oral question each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday is reserved for a question which is topical. These questions are chosen by ballot. The *Companion to the Standing Orders* provides a timetable for the ballot for sitting weeks, and sets out the rules for tabling topical oral questions:

Members may enter the ballot even if they already have one oral question on the order paper; but they may not enter the ballot if they already have an oral question on the order paper for the day concerned. No Member may ask more than four topical oral questions in one session. The Clerks discourage Members from tabling questions which are clearly not topical and indicate to Members which questions have already been tabled for ballot. No more than one question on

a subject may be accepted for inclusion in the ballot and priority is given to the first which is tabled.

(House of Lords, *Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords*, 2015, p 98)

Parliamentary Questions in Previous Sessions

There were 126 sitting days in the 2014–15 parliamentary session. During this session, a total of 444 lead oral parliamentary questions, including topical questions, were asked (this does not include supplementary questions). 181 Members asked at least one lead question. The following table shows the breakdown of the number of Members asking each number of questions in this session:

Number of Members who asked 1 question	85
Number of Members who asked 2 questions	35
Number of Members who asked 3 questions	21
Number of Members who asked 4 questions	14
Number of Members who asked 5 questions	8
Number of Members who asked 6 questions	7
Number of Members who asked 7 questions	5
Number of Members who asked 8 questions	3
Number of Members who asked 9 questions	2
Number of Members who asked 10 questions	0
Number of Members who asked 11 questions	1

There were 149 sitting days in the 2013–14 session. During this session, 543 lead oral parliamentary questions, including topical questions, were asked. 212 Members asked at least one lead question. The following table shows the breakdown of the number of Members asking each number of questions in this session:

Number of Members who asked 1 question	90
Number of Members who asked 2 questions	39
Number of Members who asked 3 questions	33
Number of Members who asked 4 questions	20
Number of Members who asked 5 questions	8
Number of Members who asked 6 questions	8
Number of Members who asked 7 questions	9
Number of Members who asked 8 questions	3
Number of Members who asked 9 questions	0
Number of Members who asked 10 questions	1
Number of Members who asked 11 questions	1

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