Taking part in
PUBLIC BILLS
in
The HOUSE of LORDS

A Guide for Members
WHERE TO FIND THE RELEVANT TEXTS

Texts of bills, amendments and marshalled lists are available from the Printed Paper Office (ext. 3037). They can also be found on the Internet at the following sites:

www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/pabills.htm
www.parliament.uk
Bills on which proceedings are limited
There are certain types of bills which it is not in order for the House to amend, and other
types where the opportunity is limited.

Finance, Consolidated Fund and Appropriation Bills
All of these are "Supply" bills. The Commons alone have the right to grant supply and the
Lords cannot amend these bills. The committee stage is accordingly negatived.
Consolidated Fund and Appropriation bills are not debated at all.

Money Bills (including Tax Law Re-write Bills)
If the Speaker certifies a Commons bill as a Money Bill the Lords have, under the terms of
the Parliament Act 1911, a calendar month to pass the bill. Though in theory this does not
stop the Lords from amending such bills in the period, the Commons do not have to
consider the Lords amendments. The committee stage of such bills in the Lords is
accordingly almost invariably negatived.

Consolidation Bills
Consolidation bills do not change the law (unless there are special recommendations to do
so from the Law Commissions). So any amendment seeking to do so is not in order. In
general only amendments to improve clarity or drafting are admissible.
TAKING PART IN PUBLIC BILLS IN
THE HOUSE OF LORDS: A Guide for Members

Members of the House of Lords have great freedom to participate in discussions on almost all public bills (subject to important exceptions which are listed at page 12). This pamphlet is intended to give practical guidance about the procedures on public bills in the Lords. More detailed information is contained in the Companion to the Standing Orders (available from the Printed Paper Office and on the Internet); and some of this information is also reproduced in House of Lords Procedure and Practice, A Guide for Members.

THE PUBLIC BILL OFFICE

The Public Bill Office is responsible for helping Members with the drafting of bills and amendments. The Office also arranges for the printing of bills and amendments and advises on the procedures of the House in relation to public bills. Members are encouraged to consult the Public Bill Office in advance if they are in doubt about what they can do or how to do it. Members considering introducing private members’ bills are referred to the pamphlet on Promoting a private member’s bill in the House of Lords.

CONTENTS

STAGES OF A PUBLIC BILL .........................................................1
Introduction and First Reading .............................................1
Second Reading......................................................................1
Committee .............................................................................1
Report..................................................................................2
Third Reading and Passing ...................................................2
The Commons and Consideration of Commons Amendments ....2

INFORMATION ABOUT TIMETABLING OF BILLS ..............6
Minimum intervals...............................................................6
Tabling of amendments ......................................................6

ADMISSIBILITY OF AMENDMENTS ........................................8
Interests ..............................................................................8

PRINTING AND MARSHALLING OF AMENDMENTS ........9
Marshalled lists ......................................................................9
Manuscript amendments .....................................................9

DEBATING AMENDMENTS .....................................................10
Grouping of amendments....................................................10

ALTERNATIVE COMMITTEE PROCEDURES ................11
Committee stage scrutiny off the floor................................11
Grand Committee .............................................................11
Public Bill Committee ........................................................11
Special Public Bill Committee ............................................11
Select committee on a bill..................................................11
Bills on which proceedings are limited ..............................12
Finance, Consolidated Fund and Appropriation Bills ..........12
Money Bills ........................................................................12
Consolidation Bills ............................................................12

WHERE TO FIND THE RELEVANT TEXTS ................................(inside cover)
TAKING PART IN PUBLIC BILLS IN
THE HOUSE OF LORDS: A Guide for Members

Members of the House of Lords have great freedom to participate in discussions on almost all public bills (subject to important exceptions which are listed at page 12). This pamphlet is intended to give practical guidance about the procedures on public bills in the Lords. More detailed information is contained in the Companion to the Standing Orders (available from the Printed Paper Office and on the Internet); and some of this information is also reproduced in House of Lords Procedure and Practice, A Guide for Members.

THE PUBLIC BILL OFFICE
The Public Bill Office is responsible for helping Members with the drafting of bills and amendments. The Office also arranges for the printing of bills and amendments and advises on the procedures of the House in relation to public bills. Members are encouraged to consult the Public Bill Office in advance if they are in doubt about what they can do or how to do it. Members considering introducing private members’ bills are referred to the pamphlet on Promoting a private member’s bill in the House of Lords.

CONTENTS

STAGES OF A PUBLIC BILL .....................................................1
Introduction and First Reading.....................................................1
Second Reading...........................................................................1
Committee ..................................................................................1
Report.........................................................................................2
Third Reading and Passing ..........................................................2
The Commons and Consideration of Commons Amendments......2

INFORMATION ABOUT TIMETABLING OF BILLS ............6
Minimum intervals.......................................................................6
Tabling of amendments................................................................6

ADMISSIBILITY OF AMENDMENTS ......................................8
Interests .......................................................................................8

PRINTING AND MARSHALLING OF AMENDMENTS ..........9
Marshalled lists.............................................................................9
Manuscript amendments ................................................................9

DEBATING AMENDMENTS ......................................................10
Grouping of amendments.............................................................10

ALTERNATIVE COMMITTEE PROCEDURES .......................11
Committee stage scrutiny off the floor.........................................11
Grand Committee .......................................................................11
Public Bill Committee .................................................................11
Special Public Bill Committee ....................................................11
Select committee on a bill...........................................................11
Bills on which proceedings are limited........................................12
Finance, Consolidated Fund and Appropriation Bills.....................12
Money Bills..................................................................................12
Consolidation Bills......................................................................12

WHERE TO FIND THE RELEVANT TEXTS .......(inside cover)
A public bill must go through a series of different stages before it is passed by the Lords.

**Introduction and First Reading**
A bill is introduced into the Lords or brought from the Commons and given a first reading without notice being given on the Order Paper. This stage is formal and enables the bill to be printed and published. Bills are usually available from the Printed Paper Office and on the Internet on the working day following introduction. Any Explanatory Notes to the Bill are usually available at the same time.

**Second Reading**
This is the stage when the general principles of the bill are debated, and members of the House give notice of the issues they are likely to want to probe by amendments at later stages.

This is the only stage of a public bill when members wishing to speak should put their names on the speakers' list kept in the Government Whips' Office (Room 12, Principal Floor, West Front) or telephone to do so (020 7219 3131). The speakers' list closes at 12 noon on the day of second reading or 6 pm on the preceding day if the House is sitting at 11 am. If any members whose names are not on the list want to speak they can still do so before the winding-up speeches, provided they confine their remarks to not more than 4 minutes.

**Committee**
This stage provides for the most detailed consideration of a bill, when it is scrutinised clause by clause and when the first opportunity is provided for amendments to be discussed. When the amendments to each clause have been disposed of, the Question is put that the clause (as amended) stand part of the bill. A general debate on the clause may take place. Any Member who wishes to leave out the clause speaks to this Question. The principal purposes of amendments on third reading are to clarify any remaining uncertainties, to improve the drafting and to enable the government to fulfil undertakings given at earlier stages of the bill. An issue which has been fully debated and voted on or negatived at a previous stage of a bill may not be reopened by an amendment on third reading. Manuscript amendments are not in order. Where a bill starting in the Lords involves expenditure out of voted funds or the imposition of a charge a privilege amendment is moved formally by the member in charge, after the other amendments have been dealt with, to avoid infringing the financial privilege of the Commons.

Report
On all bills which are amended in committee, and for the majority of important bills whether amended or not, detailed consideration is continued at the report stage. Issues which have been left over from committee may be resolved. The procedure is similar to committee, except that members may speak only once on each amendment, and only the mover of an amendment may speak after the Minister has wound up. Arguments made in committee should not be repeated at length on report. Amendments which are identical (or of identical effect) to amendments pressed to a vote by the proposer in committee are inadmissible, and amendments which seek to reverse amendments agreed to on a vote in committee should be agreed only by unanimity. Again, on important bills it is common for report stage to be spread over several days.

**Third Reading and Passing**
The third reading and passing are the final stage of consideration. If the bill affects the interests of the Crown the Queen's consent is signified by a Minister who is also a Privy Counsellor, usually before third reading. (If the bill fundamentally affects the interests or prerogative of the Crown, Queen's consent is signified before the second reading or, in rare cases, is sought by Humble Address before the bill is introduced.) The third reading itself is taken formally, and is followed by consideration of any amendments, the procedure for which is the same as on report. The principal purposes of amendments on third reading are to clarify any remaining uncertainties, to improve the drafting and to enable the government to fulfil undertakings given at earlier stages of the bill. An issue which has been fully debated and voted on or negatived at a previous stage of a bill may not be reopened by an amendment on third reading. Manuscript amendments are not in order. Where a bill starting in the Lords involves expenditure out of voted funds or the imposition of a charge a privilege amendment is moved formally by the member in charge, after the other amendments have been dealt with, to avoid infringing the financial privilege of the Commons.

The motion "that this bill do now pass", which follows immediately after third reading or any amendments, should normally be taken formally, and should not be used as the occasion for thanking those involved in the passage of the Bill. It is unusual for the combined stage to last for more than one day.

**The Commons and Consideration of Commons Amendments**
A bill introduced in the Lords is sent to the Commons in the form passed by the Lords. Any amendments subsequently made by the Commons to the bill must be considered by the Lords. This may take place at short notice. At this stage further amendments can be tabled but they must relate directly to the Commons amendments. The procedure is reversed for bills which start in the Commons. In that case the Lords amendments are sent to the Commons for them to consider, and any further amendments made by the Commons to the Lords amendments are in turn considered by the Lords.
A public bill must go through a series of different stages before it is passed by the Lords.

**Introduction and First Reading**

A bill is introduced into the Lords or brought from the Commons and given a first reading without notice being given on the Order Paper. This stage is formal and enables the bill to be printed and published. Bills are usually available from the Printed Paper Office and on the Internet on the working day following introduction. Any Explanatory Notes to the Bill are usually available at the same time.

**Second Reading**

This is the stage when the general principles of the bill are debated, and members of the House give notice of the issues they are likely to want to probe by amendments at later stages.

This is the only stage of a public bill when members wishing to speak should put their names on the speakers’ list kept in the Government Whips’ Office (Room 12, Principal Floor, West Front) or telephone to do so (020 7219 3131). The speakers’ list closes at 12 noon on the day of second reading or 6 pm on the preceding day if the House is sitting at 11 am. If any members whose names are not on the list want to speak they can still do so before the winding-up speeches, provided they confine their remarks to not more than 4 minutes.

**Committee**

This stage provides for the most detailed consideration of a bill, when it is scrutinised clause by clause and when the first opportunity is provided for amendments to be discussed. When the amendments to each clause have been disposed of, the Question is put that the clause (as amended) stand part of the bill. A general debate on the clause may take place. Any Member who wishes to leave out the clause speaks to this Question. The schedules are dealt with in like manner. At committee stage only, members can speak as often as they wish. There are different variants of committee, but the most common, and the one invariably used for the most important bills, is a committee of the whole House.

The other procedures are briefly described on page 11. On important bills the committee stage often spreads over several days.

Bills for which no amendments are tabled in committee have that stage discharged and proceed automatically to third reading.

A bill may be re-committed either in part or in its entirety at any time before third reading.

**Report**

On all bills which are amended in committee, and for the majority of important bills whether amended or not, detailed consideration is continued at the report stage. Issues which have been left over from committee may be resolved. The procedure is similar to committee, except that members may speak only once on each amendment, and only the mover of an amendment may speak after the Minister has wound up. Arguments made in committee should not be repeated at length on report. Amendments which are identical (or of identical effect) to amendments pressed to a vote by the proposer in committee are inadmissible, and amendments which seek to reverse amendments agreed to on a vote in committee should be agreed only by unanimity. Again, on important bills it is common for report stage to be spread over several days.

**Third Reading and Passing**

The third reading and passing are the final stage of consideration. If the bill affects the interests of the Crown the Queen’s consent is signified by a Minister who is also a Privy Counsellor, usually before third reading. (If the bill fundamentally affects the interests or prerogative of the Crown, Queen’s consent is signified before the second reading or, in rare cases, is sought by Humble Address before the bill is introduced.) The third reading itself is taken formally, and is followed by consideration of any amendments, the procedure for which is the same as on report. The principal purposes of amendments on third reading are to clarify any remaining uncertainties, to improve the drafting and to enable the government to fulfil undertakings given at earlier stages of the bill. An issue which has been fully debated and voted on or negatived at a previous stage of a bill may not be reopened by amendment on third reading. Manuscript amendments are not in order. Where a bill starting in the Lords involves expenditure out of voted funds or the imposition of a charge a privilege amendment is moved formally by the member in charge, after the other amendments have been dealt with, to avoid infringing the financial privilege of the Commons.

The motion "that this bill do now pass", which follows immediately after third reading or any amendments, should normally be taken formally, and should not be used as the occasion for thanking those involved in the passage of the Bill. It is unusual for the combined stage to last for more than one day.

**The Commons and Consideration of Commons Amendments**

A bill introduced in the Lords is sent to the Commons in the form passed by the Lords. Any amendments subsequently made by the Commons to the bill must be considered by the Lords. This may take place at short notice. At this stage further amendments can be tabled but they must relate directly to the Commons amendments.

The procedure is reversed for bills which start in the Commons. In that case the Lords amendments are sent to the Commons for them to consider, and any further amendments made by the Commons to the Lords amendments are in turn considered by the Lords.
In general there is no advantage, and some disadvantage, in tabling amendments at the last moment. The House has agreed that late tabling of amendments is strongly to be deprecated since other members have only a limited time to consider them and move amendments to them. Ministers will be less able to give a considered response and other members of the House may be unprepared, reducing the prospects of the amendment receiving a favourable response. Amendments which are printed for the first time on the Marshalled List or numbered supplementary list or which are materially changed since their previous publication are marked with a star.

Minimum intervals

The House has agreed that certain minimum intervals should normally be observed between the stages of public bills.

These are:

- Between introduction and second reading: 2 weekends.
- Between second reading and committee: 14 calendar days.
- Between committee and report: 14 calendar days for bills of considerable length and complexity (this period may be reduced for short and relatively simple bills, and can be done away with when bills are not amended in committee).
- Between report and third reading: 3 sitting days.

Tabling of amendments

Amendments for committee may be tabled at any time after second reading. Amendments for subsequent stages may be tabled from the day following the conclusion of the previous stage, as soon as the amended bill has been published. Amendments must be typed or in writing and handed into or sent by post or fax to the Public Bill Office. The deadline for tabling amendments to be printed the following day is 5 pm. On Fridays the deadline for all amendments is 4 pm. In recesses amendments may be tabled with the Duty Clerk, in attendance between 10 am and 5 pm and who is contactable via the switchboard on 7219-3000.

All amendments must be signed by the member or members in whose name they are to stand. Other than in exceptional circumstances the Public Bill Office does not accept amendments tabled orally, by telephone or by e-mail; but members may indicate by telephone that they wish to add their names to amendments. No member's name will be attached to any amendment unless the Public Bill Office has received explicit instructions from that member to that effect.

Advice on how to draft amendments is available from the Public Bill Office. Pro forma sheets on which the text of amendments can be inserted are also available. Each amendment should be put on a separate sheet (see opposite).
In general there is no advantage, and some disadvantage, in tabling amendments at the last moment. The House has agreed that late tabling of amendments is strongly to be deprecated since other members have only a limited time to consider them and move amendments to them. Ministers will be less able to give a considered response and other members of the House may be unprepared, reducing the prospects of the amendment receiving a favourable response. Amendments which are printed for the first time on the Marshalled List or numbered supplementary list or which are materially changed since their previous publication are marked with a star.

Minimum intervals
The House has agreed that certain minimum intervals should normally be observed between the stages of public bills.

These are:
- Between introduction and second reading: 2 weekends.
- Between second reading and committee: 14 calendar days.
- Between committee and report: 14 calendar days for bills of considerable length and complexity (this period may be reduced for short and relatively simple bills, and can be done away with when bills are not amended in committee).
- Between report and third reading: 3 sitting days.

Tabling of amendments
Amendments for committee may be tabled at any time after second reading. Amendments for subsequent stages may be tabled from the day following the conclusion of the previous stage, as soon as the amended bill has been published.

Amendments must be typed or in writing and handed into or sent by post or fax to the Public Bill Office. The deadline for tabling amendments to be printed the following day is 5 pm. On Fridays the deadline for all amendments is 4 pm. In recesses amendments may be tabled with the Duty Clerk, in attendance between 10 am and 5 pm and who is contactable via the switchboard on 7219-3000.

All amendments not tabled in person must be signed by the member or members in whose name they are to stand. Other than in exceptional circumstances the Public Bill Office does not accept amendments tabled orally, by telephone or by e-mail; but members may indicate by telephone that they wish to add their names to amendments. No member's name will be attached to any amendment unless the Public Bill Office has received explicit instructions from that member to that effect.

Advice on how to draft amendments is available from the Public Bill Office. Pro forma sheets on which the text of amendments can be inserted are also available. Each amendment should be put on a separate sheet (see opposite).
PRINTING AND MARSHALLING OF AMENDMENTS

Amendments handed in are printed overnight and published on the next working day, when they are available in the Printed Paper Office and on the Internet. All amendments to a particular bill tabled on the same day are printed in one daily sheet. They are not numbered at this stage. The names of members supporting an amendment are printed above it, up to a maximum of four, or five if the member in charge of the bill adds his name.

Marshalled lists
On or just before the first day of the stage in question, the various amendments are numbered and published as a "marshalled list", collated in the order in which they relate to the bill (subject to any instruction by the House to take the amendments in a particular order). In committee and at report stage, marshalled lists are produced on the working day before the stage is begun or resumed, and amendments handed in later are incorporated in a revised marshalled list or are published on numbered supplementary lists. Italic notes giving notice of a member's intention to leave out a clause or schedule in committee are not given a number when printed in the marshalled list.

When a stage is not completed in one day, any new amendments are printed on sheets supplementary to the marshalled list and further marshalled lists are published for each subsequent day.

Manuscript amendments
Whenever possible notice should be given of any amendments. But in committee and on report it is in order to move, as manuscript amendments, amendments of which notice has not been given. Occasionally a manuscript amendment is justified, for instance to correct an amendment already tabled, or when an amendment under consideration is objected to and it is clear that with slight alteration of language it would become acceptable. However the House has agreed that the moving of manuscript amendments should seldom be done. (Manuscript amendments on third reading are prohibited.)

ADMISSIBILITY OF AMENDMENTS

The following general rules apply:

• Amendments must be relevant to the subject matter of the bill and to the clause or schedule to which they are proposed. The long title of the bill usually gives a clear indication of its subject matter.
• Amendments must not be inconsistent with a decision taken earlier at the same stage, except where alternative amendments are proposed to the same place in the bill.
• Amendments to a schedule are not in order if they go beyond the scope of, or are contrary to, the relevant clause which has already been agreed to.
• Amendments to the long title are in order only if they are to rectify a mistake in the original title, to restate the title more clearly, or to reflect amendments which have been made to the bill.
• Clause headings and the headings placed above parts of the bill or above groups of clauses, are technically not part of the bill and are not open to amendment. The punctuation is also technically not part of the bill.
• On report it is not in order to table amendments identical or of identical effect to amendments pressed to a vote in committee by the proposer; and amendments reversing an amendment agreed to on a vote in committee should only be agreed by unanimity.
• On third reading it is not in order to table amendments reopening issues which have been fully debated and decided (on a vote or by being negatived) at an earlier stage.

In addition, tabling amendments to bills originating in the House of Commons is unprofitable if such amendments appear to be "material and intolerable infringements" of Commons financial privilege (in that they impose a charge not covered by the financial resolutions passed the Commons) unless there is reason to believe that the Commons will pass a supplementary financial resolution.

The Public Bill Office is able to give advice on the form, wording and admissibility of amendments. Whether an amendment is in order can ultimately be decided only by the House itself. But if the Public Bill Office believes an amendment is not in order, it will notify the member concerned, and will not table the amendment unless the member insists on putting the matter to the House to decide.

Interests
Members of the House are reminded that the rules of the House relating to interests apply to proceedings on public bills and that, with effect from 1st March 2002, the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords will also apply.
ADMISSIBILITY OF AMENDMENTS

The following general rules apply:

• Amendments must be relevant to the subject matter of the bill and to the clause or schedule to which they are proposed. The long title of the bill usually gives a clear indication of its subject matter.
• Amendments must not be inconsistent with a decision taken earlier at the same stage, except where alternative amendments are proposed to the same place in the bill.
• Amendments to a schedule are not in order if they go beyond the scope of, or are contrary to, the relevant clause which has already been agreed to.
• Amendments to the long title are in order only if they are to rectify a mistake in the original title, to restate the title more clearly, or to reflect amendments which have been made to the bill.
• Clause headings and the headings placed above parts of the bill or above groups of clauses, are technically not part of the bill and are not open to amendment.
• On report it is not in order to table amendments identical or of identical effect to amendments pressed to a vote in committee by the proposer; and amendments reversing an amendment agreed to on a vote in committee should only be agreed by unanimity.
• On third reading it is not in order to table amendments reopening issues which have been fully debated and decided (on a vote or by being negatived) at an earlier stage.

In addition, tabling amendments to bills originating in the House of Commons is unprofitable if such amendments appear to be “material and intolerable infringements” of Commons financial privilege (in that they impose a charge not covered by the financial resolutions passed the Commons) unless there is reason to believe that the Commons will pass a supplementary financial resolution.

The Public Bill Office is able to give advice on the form, wording and admissibility of amendments. Whether an amendment is in order can ultimately be decided only by the House itself. But if the Public Bill Office believes an amendment is not in order, it will notify the member concerned, and will not table the amendment unless the member insists on putting the matter to the House to decide.

Interests

Members of the House are reminded that the rules of the House relating to interests apply to proceedings on public bills and that, with effect from 1st March 2002, the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords will also apply.

PRINTING AND MARSHALLING OF AMENDMENTS

Amendments handed in are printed overnight and published on the next working day, when they are available in the Printed Paper Office and on the Internet. All amendments to a particular bill tabled on the same day are printed in one daily sheet. They are not numbered at this stage. The names of members supporting an amendment are printed above it, up to a maximum of four, or five if the member in charge of the bill adds his name.

Marshalled lists

On or just before the first day of the stage in question, the various amendments are numbered and published as a "marshalled list", collated in the order in which they relate to the bill (subject to any instruction by the House to take the amendments in a particular order). In committee and at report stage, marshalled lists are produced on the working day before the stage is begun or resumed, and amendments handed in later are incorporated in a revised marshalled list or are published on numbered supplementary lists. Italic notes giving notice of a member's intention to leave out a clause or schedule in committee are not given a number when printed in the marshalled list.

When a stage is not completed in one day, any new amendments are printed on sheets supplementary to the marshalled list and further marshalled lists are published for each subsequent day.

Manuscript amendments

Whenever possible notice should be given of any amendments. But in committee and on report it is in order to move, as manuscript amendments, amendments of which notice has not been given. Occasionally a manuscript amendment is justified, for instance to correct an amendment already tabled, or when an amendment under consideration is objected to and it is clear that with slight alteration of language it would become acceptable. However the House has agreed that the moving of manuscript amendments should seldom be done. (Manuscript amendments on third reading are prohibited.)
There is no selection of amendments in the Lords. Every amendment printed on a marshalled list or numbered supplementary list, and each manuscript amendment, is called unless notice is received that the amendment has been withdrawn, or it is pre-empted by an earlier amendment. An amendment which has been tabled need not be moved, but if none of the members named as supporters of the amendment moves it any other member may do so. Once an amendment has been moved, it can be withdrawn only by unanimous leave. If there is no such unanimity the question is put on the amendment. If a member decides not to move an amendment, he says “Not moved”. No explanatory speech should be made.

Grouping of amendments

In order to avoid repetition, related amendments are often grouped and debated together. Lists of such groupings are prepared by agreement between the Government Whips’ Office and the members tabling the amendments, and are available in the Printed Paper Office, the Prince’s Chamber and the Peers’ Lobby, usually by about 2 pm on the day the amendments are to be debated (10 am when the House meets at 11 am). For committee stages a draft list of groupings is available in the Government Whips’ Office at 2.30 pm on the day before the stage is taken; for other stages the draft list is available in that Office from about 11 am on the day of the stage (earlier when the House sits at 11 am). The list of groupings usually covers only the amendments expected to be debated that day and it provides a helpful indication of the length of proceedings and of how the issues are to be covered.

Groupings are informal and not binding, but it may be inconvenient to other members if they are departed from without advance notice. This makes it important for those members who have tabled amendments to contact the Government Whips’ Office in advance to discuss the draft lists of groupings. For committee stages this should be on the afternoon of the working day before that stage: for other stages it should be between 11 am and 12.30 pm on the day the amendments are to be debated (6 pm the night before when the House sits at 11 am). It can also be helpful to let the Whips’ Office know in advance how far a member wants (or does not want) his amendments to be grouped. Even if an amendment has been debated in an earlier group it must be called, moved (if desired) and disposed of separately in its place in the marshalled list. Further debate may take place at this stage but this is not common. Many such amendments are either not moved or moved formally as follows: “My Lords, I have already spoken to this amendment. I beg to move.” This is, however, the time to put an amendment to the vote unless there has been a division on an earlier amendment in the group. (It is unusual to vote on an amendment when a division has already taken place on an earlier amendment in the group, except when the later amendment is not consequential on the earlier amendment or when notice has been given in debate.)

If a member believes that an amendment at committee or report stage has been wrongly grouped, he should make this clear in debate. This is because, if the group is voted on at either stage, a member may not be allowed to retable the amendment on third reading because of the rule prohibiting the reopening at that stage of issues previously decided.

The most common form of committee procedure is committee of the whole House. There are, however, a number of other procedures which either replace or are in addition to committee of the whole House.

Committee stage scrutiny off the floor

Grand Committee
This is a committee of the whole House, meeting in a committee room (usually the Moses Room), but without divisions. Other business takes place at the same time in the Chamber. It is the most frequently used of the alternatives to committee of the whole House.

Public Bill Committee
This procedure hands the conduct of the committee stage to a select committee. The procedure may be used for government bills of a technical and non-controversial nature. Members of the House who are not members of the committee can participate in proceedings, but may not vote. Such Committees are now rare, having been largely superseded by the Grand Committee procedure, and none has sat since 1993.

Special Public Bill Committee
This is a public bill committee which can take written and oral evidence over a maximum period of 28 days after its appointment, before going through the bill clause by clause and considering amendments. Any bill can be scrutinised in this way, though it is usually reserved for technical measures which are not controversial in party political terms. All members of the House can participate in the hearing of evidence and the consideration of amendments, but only members of the committee can vote. Such Committees are very rarely set up.

Notice of the committee stage proceedings in all these types of committee is given in the Minute and on Forthcoming Business. Any member of the House can table amendments to any bill before one of these committees, and the amendments, marshalled lists and groupings are produced in the usual way. The Hansard of the committee stage proceedings is printed as an appendix to the daily part.

In each of these three cases, the next stage is report

Select committee on a bill
This procedure allows detailed investigation by a select committee at any stage between second and third readings. The committee may take evidence and reports to the House on the provisions of the bill, recommending whether or not it should proceed. If recommending that the bill should proceed, the committee may make amendments if it sees fit, and the bill is re-committed to a committee of the whole House. Notice of meetings is given on the committee sheet. The next stage is committee (on re-commitment).
DEBATING AMENDMENTS

There is no selection of amendments in the Lords. Every amendment printed on a marshalled list or numbered supplementary list, and each manuscript amendment, is called unless notice is received that the amendment has been withdrawn, or it is pre-empted by an earlier amendment. An amendment which has been tabled need not be moved, but if none of the members named as supporters of the amendment moves it any other member may do so. Once an amendment has been moved, it can be withdrawn only by unanimous leave. If there is no such unanimity the question is put on the amendment. If a member decides not to move an amendment, he says “Not moved”. No explanatory speech should be made.

Grouping of amendments

In order to avoid repetition, related amendments are often grouped and debated together. Lists of such groupings are prepared by agreement between the Government Whips’ Office and the members tabling the amendments, and are available in the Printed Paper Office, the Prince’s Chamber and the Peers’ Lobby, usually by about 2 pm on the day the amendments are to be debated (10 am when the House meets at 11 am). For committee stages a draft list of groupings is available in the Government Whips’ Office at 2.30 pm on the day before the stage is taken; for other stages the draft is available in that Office from about 11 am on the day of the stage (earlier when the House sits at 11 am). The list of groupings usually covers only the amendments expected to be debated that day and it provides a helpful indication of the length of proceedings and of how the issues are to be covered.

Groupings are informal and not binding, but it may be inconvenient to other members if they are departed from without advance notice. This makes it important for those members who have tabled amendments to contact the Government Whips’ Office in advance to discuss the draft lists of groupings. For committee stages this should be on the afternoon of the working day before that stage; for other stages it should be between 11 am and 12.30 pm on the day the amendments are to be debated (6 pm the night before when the House sits at 11 am). It can also be helpful to let the Whips’ Office know in advance how far a member believes an amendment can be debated without a division on an earlier amendment in the group. An amendment which has been tabled need not be moved, but if none of the members named as supporters of the amendment moves it any other member may do so. Once an amendment has been moved, it can be withdrawn only by unanimous leave. If there is no such unanimity the question is put on the amendment.

If a member believes that an amendment at committee or report stage has been wrongly grouped, he should make this clear in debate. This is because, if the group is voted on at either stage, a member may not be allowed to retable the amendment on third reading because of the rule prohibiting the reopening at that stage of issues previously decided.

ALTERNATIVE COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

The most common form of committee procedure is committee of the whole House. There are, however, a number of other procedures which either replace or are in addition to committee of the whole House.

Committee stage scrutiny off the floor

Grand Committee

This is a committee of the whole House, meeting in a committee room (usually the Moses Room), but without divisions. Other business takes place at the same time in the Chamber. It is the most frequently used of the alternatives to committee of the whole House.

Public Bill Committee

This procedure hands the conduct of the committee stage to a select committee. The procedure may be used for government bills of a technical and non-controversial nature. Members of the House who are not members of the committee can participate in proceedings, but may not vote. Such Committees are now rare, having been largely superseded by the Grand Committee procedure, and none has sat since 1993.

Special Public Bill Committee

This is a public bill committee which can take written and oral evidence over a maximum period of 28 days after its appointment, before going through the bill clause by clause and considering amendments. Any bill can be scrutinised in this way, though it is usually reserved for technical measures which are not controversial in party political terms. All members of the House can participate in the hearing of evidence and the consideration of amendments, but only members of the committee can vote. Such Committees are very rarely set up.

Notice of the committee stage proceedings in all these types of committee is given in the Minute and on Forthcoming Business. Any member of the House can table amendments to any bill before one of these committees, and the amendments, marshalled lists and groupings are produced in the usual way. The Hansard of the committee stage proceedings is printed as an appendix to the daily part.

In each of these three cases, the next stage is report

Select committee on a bill

This procedure allows detailed investigation by a select committee at any stage between second and third readings. The committee may take evidence and reports to the House on the provisions of the bill, recommending whether or not it should proceed. If recommending that the bill should proceed, the committee may make amendments if it sees fit, and the bill is re-committed to a committee of the whole House. Notice of meetings is given on the committee sheet. The next stage is committee (on re-commitment).
Bills on which proceedings are limited
There are certain types of bills which it is not in order for the House to amend, and other types where the opportunity is limited.

Finance, Consolidated Fund and Appropriation Bills
All of these are "Supply" bills. The Commons alone have the right to grant supply and the Lords cannot amend these bills. The committee stage is accordingly negatived. Consolidated Fund and Appropriation bills are not debated at all.

Money Bills (including Tax Law Re-write Bills)
If the Speaker certifies a Commons bill as a Money Bill the Lords have, under the terms of the Parliament Act 1911, a calendar month to pass the bill. Though in theory this does not stop the Lords from amending such bills in the period, the Commons do not have to consider the Lords amendments. The committee stage of such bills in the Lords is accordingly almost invariably negatived.

Consolidation Bills
Consolidation bills do not change the law (unless there are special recommendations to do so from the Law Commissions). So any amendment seeking to do so is not in order. In general only amendments to improve clarity or drafting are admissible.
House of Lords
Public Bill Office
First Floor West Front
[Room 28 – Take lift or staircase, opposite the Clerk of the Parliaments’ Office on Principal Floor]
Tel: 020 7219 3153/4
Fax: 020 7219 5933

map has to be adjusted because Stages diagram is now only 100mm wide