

# WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

## UK GENERAL ELECTION 2024 EXPLAINED

On Thursday July 4th, people in the UK over the age of 18 will be voting in a General Election. Coach John looks at how it works.



Polls open in the UK on Thursday 4 July for people to choose which party they want to form the next government.

### What is a general election for?

It's a chance for people around the UK to choose the local MP who will represent their area - known as a **constituency** - for up to five years in the House of Commons.

There is a choice of several candidates in each constituency and there are 650 constituencies.

### How does it work?

We use something called the '**first past the post**' voting system, which means MPs win seats if they get more votes than other candidates standing in their constituency.

The party that wins an **overall** majority of seats - so anything more than 326 MPs - wins the election and can form the next government.

People aged 18 or over in each constituency can vote once for their preferred candidate. However, prisoners serving a sentence for a conviction cannot vote in UK parliamentary elections and neither can **peers** in the House of Lords.

### How does this determine who becomes prime minister?

While you can't vote for who you want to be prime minister directly, your vote in your local constituency contributes.

That's because the political party that wins the most seats in the House of Commons at a general election forms the new government and its leader becomes prime minister.

### What happens when polls close?

After 10pm, once all votes are in, **ballot boxes** in all constituencies are taken to what's known as a "count centre" - a large space like a community hall where counting can begin.

This is a **lengthy** process and goes on through the night.

Results come in throughout the night and by early morning, it is usually clear which party has the majority.

The final results **tend** to come in by late morning.

### Adapted from the internet

by ECP coach **John**



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## Word list

**constituency: (n)** a body of constituents; the voters in an area who are represented by an elected official

**first past the post: (n)** is a plurality voting system wherein voters cast a vote for a single candidate, and the candidate with the most votes wins the election

**overall: (adj)** including or covering everything: the overall number of seats in a parliament

**deadline: (n)** the time by which something must be finished

**ballot boxes: (n)** a receptacle for voters' ballots (votes)

**peer: (n)** a member of the house of Lords

**lengthy: (adj)** of great length; very long

**tend: (v)** to be likely to do something; to happen often

## Let's chat about that!

1. Summarise the texts (*To answer the questions you will need to read both texts on pages 1 and 2*)
2. What's the difference between the UK's first past the post electoral system and the system used here?
3. What are the pros and cons of the two systems?
4. Which groups of people are ineligible to vote in the UK?
5. Do you think 16 year olds should be allowed to vote? (Labour Party and SNP policies)
6. Look at the list of the main UK political parties on page 2. What are their nearest equivalents in your country?
7. Which party will win today?

## SOME UK POLITICAL PARTIES

**Conservative Party** - A centre-right to right wing party which promotes British conservatism and unionism.

**Labour Party** - A centre-left party which promotes social democracy and democratic socialism.

**Liberal Democrats** - A centrist party which promotes liberalism and federalism.

**Green Party of England and Wales** - A left-wing party which promotes green politics, eco-socialism and republicanism.

**Reform UK** - A Eurosceptic and right-wing populist party that was originally founded as the

Brexit Party in November 2018, before being re-named to Reform UK in January 2021.

**Scottish National Party (SNP)** - A party mainly focused on achieving Scottish independence from the United Kingdom. It is a centre-left party which promotes social democracy.

**Plaid Cymru** - A centre-left party which promotes social democracy, democratic socialism and the creation of an independent Wales, free from the United Kingdom.

**Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)** - A right-wing Protestant

party which strongly promotes British unionism.

**Sinn Fein (SF)** - A left-wing Catholic party which promotes democratic socialism and Irish republicanism.

**Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)** - A centre-left party which promotes Irish republicanism and social democracy.

**Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)** - A centre-right party which promotes British Unionism and conservatism. Allied to the UK Conservative Party.