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**What are Early day motions?**

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## What are Early day motions?



**Early day motions (EDMs) are formal motions submitted for debate in the House of Commons. However, very few EDMs are actually debated.**

### How are EDMs used?

EDMs are used for reasons such as publicising the views of individual MPs, drawing attention to specific events or campaigns, and demonstrating the extent of parliamentary support for a particular cause or point of view.

### Do they get debated?

Although there is very little prospect of EDMs being debated, many attract a great deal of public interest and frequently receive media

### EDM database

Early Day Motions (EDMs) are formal motions submitted for debate in the House of Commons. The EDM database contains up-to-date information on the latest EDMs and signatures added to existing EDMs.

[EDM database](#)

### Related information

**Statutory instrument:** This is a type of delegated or secondary legislation. Delegated legislation allows the government to make changes to a law without needing to pass a completely new Act of Parliament.

### Most popular EDM

The record for most signatures on an EDM was set in the 2001-02 session. Malcolm Savidge's EDM on the need to avoid conflict between India and Pakistan attracted 502 signatures. Previously the record was 482 signatures for an EDM on service pensions tabled in 1964 by Sir

coverage.

### **Do they have to comply to a format?**

EDMs have a strict format. Each one has a short title, like 'Internet Gambling', and a sentence no longer than 250 words detailing the motion.

### **What are the rules?**

Other than following the above format, EDMs must abide by certain rules about their subject matter. The main ones are:

EDMs may only criticise other MPs, Lords, judges or members of the royal family if that is the main subject of the motion

no reference should be made to matters before the courts

no unparliamentary language or irony should be used

titles must be purely descriptive

### **Types of EDMs**

EDMs against statutory instruments (are known as 'prayer') - generally the only type of EDM that leads to a debate.

Internal party groups - put forward by party members to express a different view on an issue to the official party position.

All-party EDMs - usually promote an issue, such as animal welfare, across party divides. Generally, only all-party EDMs attract a large number of signatures.

Critical - occasionally EDMs are tabled criticising another Member of the House, or a member of the House of Lords.

Promotion - of an outside campaign or report (often by the voluntary sector).

Constituency issue - drawing attention to and commenting on.

Commenting on deficiencies in other parties' policies - often by government MPs as they can't criticise the Opposition at question time.

### **Signatures**

In an average session only six or seven EDMs reach over two hundred signatures. Around seventy or eighty get over one hundred

Robert Cary.

### **Read current EDMs**

Browse early day motions published over the last ten days. Or use the database to search all of this sessions EDMs.

[Read current EDMs](#)

[Use the EDMs database](#)

### **Related internet links**

Watch BBC Parliament's short film on EDMs:

Parliament is not responsible for the content of external websites.

[BBC Parliament: EDMs](#)

signatures. The majority will attract only one or two signatures.

An EDM is not likely to be debated even if it gains a large number of signatures.

### **Who will not sign?**

The following people in Parliament normally will not sign EDMs:

Ministers and government whips

Parliamentary Private Secretaries

The Speaker and his deputies

Ministers and whips do not normally sign EDMs. The 2005 Ministerial Code stated that Parliamentary Private Secretaries "must not associate themselves with particular groups advocating special policies", and they do not normally sign EDMs. Neither the Speaker nor Deputy Speakers will sign EDMs. Internal party rules may also affect who can sign early day motions.

### **Amendments to EDMs**

After an EDM has been tabled, other Members can then table amendments to the original EDM. Proposed amendments must not increase the motion's length beyond 250 words and any names of Members signing an amendment are automatically withdrawn from the main motion.

EDM's that are amendments to a previous motion have an 'A' after their number followed by a further number to indicate whether it is the first amendment, second etc.

### **Withdrawal of EDMs**

The Member in charge of an EDM (i.e. the first signatory) may withdraw it even if other Members have signed it. Individual names may also be withdrawn.

### **Tracing EDMs**

EDMs dating back to the 1989-90 session of Parliament can be traced using the EDM database. It records the full title and text of EDMs and signatures of supporting MPs.

[EDMs database](#)

For Early Day Motions prior to 1989-90, enquirers should contact the Parliamentary Archives.

[Contact the Parliamentary Archives](#)

Image: PA

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