

TEXT SUMMARY

Congress does most of its work in committees, or small groups. The **standing committees** are permanent, specialize in one subject each, and handle all bills that relate to that subject. The majority party holds a majority of seats on each committee. The parties decide committee membership, and Congress ratifies the choices.

The House Rules Committee is one of the most powerful committees of the House. Its members determine when and under what conditions the whole House will debate and vote on bills. The Rules Committee can speed up, delay, or even prevent action on a bill.

Congress uses several special committees. A **select committee** is a group set

up for a specific and usually temporary purpose, such as an investigation. A **joint committee**, which can be either temporary or permanent, includes members from both houses so that separate committees in the houses do not duplicate each other's work. A **conference committee** is a type of temporary joint committee that is set up when the House and Senate have each passed different versions of the same law. The conference committee works out a compromise bill that both houses will accept.

THE BIG IDEA

The Senate and the House both divide into committees to manage their business and decide which bills will receive attention.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Committees of Congress

Standing Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent • Specializes in one subject • Handles all bills relating to that subject <p>Examples: House Rules Committee, House Ways and Means Committee, Senate Armed Services Committee, Senate Finance Committee</p>
Select Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually temporary • Set up for a specific purpose, such as an investigation <p>Examples: Select Committee on Aging (both houses), Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, House Committee on Agriculture</p>
Joint Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent or temporary • Includes members of both houses so that the houses do not duplicate work <p>Examples: Joint Economic Committee, Joint Committee on Printing, Joint Committee on the Library of Congress, Joint Committee on Taxation</p>
Conference Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary • Works out a compromise bill when the House and the Senate have passed different versions of the same bill

To deal with its heavy workload, Congress divides into several types of committees.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the major job of the House Rules Committee?
2. **Chart Skills** Which type of committee would be used to investigate improper usage of the Internet?