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Leadership Elections: Labour Party

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Summary

Labour Party members elect a leader from candidates who have been nominated by at least 15% of all Labour MPs. Since 2014, each party member gets one vote only, and their votes are of equal weight.

On 8 May 2015, Ed Miliband resigned as party leader, triggering leadership elections. Deputy leader Harriet Harman announced she would resign her position as soon as a new leader and deputy leader have been elected.

On 12 September 2015, Jeremy Corbyn was announced as the new party leader and Tom Watson was announced as the new deputy leader.

The previous leadership contest took place in 2010. Prior to that, Gordon Brown had been elected in 2007 to succeed Tony Blair, who had been party leader since 1994.

The Labour Party has held leadership elections since 1906.

1. Leadership election rules

1.1 Current rules

On 10 July 2013, Labour Party leader Ed Miliband commissioned a review into Labour Party reform led by Lord Collins. The Collins Review, published in February 2014, made recommendations to reform the rules for the election of the Labour Party leader.¹ The recommendations of the Review were approved by the National Executive Committee on 4 February 2014 and then ratified by a Special Conference on 1 March 2014.²

The new rules require nominated candidates to have the support of 15% of all Labour MPs (up from 12.5%) and changed the voting procedure. Previously, three categories of voters each commanded one third of the overall vote: MPs and MEPs; individual Labour Party members; and members of affiliated organisations, most notably Trade Unions. Under the current rules, voting occurs on the one person, one vote principle: each member can vote only once, and all votes bear the same weight. The previous rules for leadership election are reproduced in Appendix 1.

The current rules for the election of the party leader are set out in Chapter 4, Clause II of the *Labour Party Rule Book 2015*:

2. Election of leader and deputy leader

A. The leader and deputy leader shall be elected separately in accordance with rule C below, unless rule E below applies.

B. Nomination

i. In the case of a vacancy for leader or deputy leader, each nomination must be supported by 15 per cent of the Commons members of the PLP. Nominations not attaining this threshold shall be null and void.

ii. Where there is no vacancy, nominations may be sought by potential challengers each year prior to the annual session of Party conference. In this case any nomination must be supported by 20 per cent of the Commons members of the PLP. Nominations not attaining this threshold shall be null and void.

iii. Affiliated organisations, the ALC, Young Labour, and CLPs and Labour Members of the European Parliament may also nominate for each of the offices of leader and deputy leader. All nominees must be Commons members of the PLP.

iv. Nominees shall inform the General Secretary in writing of the acceptance or otherwise of their nomination at least two clear weeks before the commencement of the procedures for voting laid out in rule C below. Unless written consent to nomination is received, nominations shall be rendered null and void.

v. Valid nominations shall be printed in the final agenda for Party conference, together with the names of the nominating

Candidates require the support of 15% of Labour MPs for their nomination. Party members get one vote each to elect the party leader.

¹ Ray Collins, *The Collins Review into Labour Party Reform: Building a One Nation Labour Party*, February 2014

² Labour List, *Final "Collins Review" document released ahead of Special Conference*, 7 February 2014

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organisations and Commons members of the PLP supporting the nominations. In the case of a vacancy under E below this information shall be included with the documentation circulated with any ballot.

vi. Nominees who do not attend the relevant Party conference shall be deemed to have withdrawn their nominations, unless they send to the General Secretary – on or before the day on which the conference opens – an explanation in writing of their absence satisfactory to the CAC.

C. Voting

i. The General Secretary shall be the Returning Officer.

ii. The Returning Officer shall appoint a Labour Party legal advisor to act as Deputy Returning Officer who shall advise on any matters of dispute in respect of eligibility or procedure.

iii. An Independent Scrutineer will be appointed by the Returning Officer to oversee and verify the ballot, and the results shall be declared at a session of Party Conference.

iv. The timetable for the election, including any freeze date, and the procedures for agreeing the list of those eligible to vote must be approved by the Independent Scrutineer.

v. The procedures shall ensure that each candidate has equal access to the eligible electorate and has equal treatment in all other matters pertaining to the election.

vi. Votes shall be cast in a single section, by Labour Party members, affiliated supporters and registered supporters.

vii. The precise eligibility criteria shall be defined by the National Executive Committee and set out in procedural guidelines and in each annual report to conference.

viii. No person shall be entitled to receive more than one vote. Votes shall be cast by each individual and counted on the basis of one person one vote.

ix. Voting shall be by preferential ballot. The votes shall be totalled and the candidate receiving more than half of the votes so apportioned shall be declared elected. If no candidate reaches this total on the count of first preference votes, a redistribution of votes shall take place according to preferences indicated on the ballot paper.

x. The votes cast for each nominee shall be recorded and published in a form to be determined by the NEC as soon as possible following any election.

xi. In the event of any conflict between these rules and the constitutional rules and other general rules of the Party, these rules shall prevail.

D. Timing of an election

i. When the PLP is in opposition in the House of Commons, the election of the leader and deputy leader shall take place at each annual session of Party conference.

ii. When the PLP is in government and the leader and/ or deputy leader are prime minister and/ or in Cabinet, an election shall proceed only if requested by a majority of Party conference on a card vote.

iii. In any other circumstances an election shall only be held when a vacancy occurs, subject to E below.

E. Procedure in a vacancy

i. When the Party is in government and the Party leader is prime minister and the Party leader, for whatever reason, becomes permanently unavailable, the Cabinet shall, in consultation with the NEC, appoint one of its members to serve as Party leader until a ballot under these rules can be carried out.

ii. When the Party is in government and the deputy leader becomes Party leader under i above of this rule, the Cabinet may, in consultation with the NEC, appoint one of its members to serve as deputy leader until the next Party conference. The Cabinet may alternatively, in consultation with the NEC, leave the post vacant until the next Party conference.

iii. When the Party is in government and the deputy leader, for whatever reason, becomes permanently unavailable, the Cabinet may, in consultation with the NEC, appoint one of its members to serve as deputy leader until the next Party conference. The Cabinet may alternatively, in consultation with the NEC, leave the post vacant until the next Party conference.

iv. When the Party is in opposition and the Party leader, for whatever reason, becomes permanently unavailable, the deputy leader shall automatically become Party leader on a pro-tem basis. The NEC shall decide whether to hold an immediate ballot as provided under E above or to elect a new leader at the next annual session of Party conference.

v. When the Party is in opposition and the leader and deputy leader, for whatever reason, both become permanently unavailable, the NEC shall order a postal ballot as provided under E above. In consultation with the Shadow Cabinet they may choose to appoint a member of the Shadow Cabinet to serve as Party leader until the outcome of that ballot.

2. Leadership contests 2015

On the day after the general election of 7 May 2015, Ed Miliband announced his resignation as Labour Party leader. He said:

Friends, this is not the speech I wanted to give today, because I believed that Britain needed a Labour government.

I still do but the public voted otherwise yesterday night. Earlier today, I rang David Cameron to congratulate him.

I take absolute and total responsibility for the result and our defeat at this election. [...]

Britain needs a strong Labour party. Britain needs a Labour party that can rebuild after this defeat so we can have a government that stands up for working people again.

Now it is time for someone else to take forward the leadership of this party. So I am tendering my resignation taking effect after this afternoon's commemoration of VE day at the Cenotaph.

I want to do so straight away because the party needs to have an open and honest debate about the right way forward, without constraint.

Let me say that Harriet Harman is the best deputy leader anyone could hope for. I worked for her more than twenty years ago. I am proud to have had her as my deputy for the term of my leadership. She will take over until a new leader is elected.³

On the same day Harriet Harman, deputy leader and acting leader until the outcome of the leadership election was announced, declared her resignation as deputy leader, to take effect upon the election of the new leader and deputy leader.⁴

The National Executive Committee met on 13 May 2015 and determined the timetable for the leadership and deputy leadership elections:

- Friday 15 May: Election period opens
- Monday 8 June: PLP nomination hustings for Leader
- Tuesday 9 June: PLP nomination ustings for Deputy Leader
- Tuesday 9 June: PLP nominations open
- 22 noon Monday 15 June: PLP nominations (Leader) close
- 12 noon Wednesday 17 June: PLP nominations (Deputy Leader) close
- Wednesday 17 June: Hustings period opens
- 12 noon Friday 31 July: Supporting nominations close
- 12 noon Wednesday 12 August: Last date to join as member, affiliated supporter, or registered supporter
- Friday 14 August: Ballot mailing despatched
- 12 noon Thursday 10 September: Ballot closes
- Saturday 12 September: Special conference to announce result.⁵

³ [‘This is not the speech I wanted to give’](#), *Labour Party Website*, 8 May 2015

⁴ [‘Paying tribute’](#), *Labour Party Website*, 8 May 2015

⁵ [‘Timetable announced for Labour Leader and Deputy Leader elections’](#), *Labour Party Website*, 13 May 2015

These were the first elections fought under the new rules described above.

Leadership election

Six candidates announced their intention to stand for the leadership of the Labour Party:

- Liz Kendall (announced her intention on 10 May 2015)⁶
- Chuka Umunna (announced his intention on 12 May 2015)⁷
- Andy Burnham (announced his intention on 13 May 2015)⁸
- Yvette Cooper (announced her intention on 13 May 2015)⁹
- Mary Creagh (announced her intention on 14 May 2015)¹⁰
- Jeremy Corbyn (announced his intention on 3 June 2015)¹¹

Chuka Umunna withdrew his candidacy on 15 May and Mary Creagh withdrew her candidacy on 12 June. All four remaining candidates had received the required 35 nominations or more by 15 June, the day nominations closed.

The result of the election was announced on 12 September. Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader in the first round of voting.

Labour leadership election 2015: results

	Members	Registered % supporters	Registered % supporters	Affiliated % supporters	% Total	%		
Jeremy Corbyn	121,751	49.6	88,449	83.8	41,217	57.6	251,417	59.5
Andy Burnham	55,698	22.7	6,160	5.8	18,604	26	80,462	19
Yvette Cooper	54,470	22.2	8,415	8	9,043	12.6	71,928	17
Liz Kendall	13,601	5.5	2,574	2.4	2,682	3.7	18,857	4.5
Total	245,520		105,598		71,546		422,664	

Source: BBC News

Deputy leadership election

Seven candidates announced their intention to stand for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party:

- Tom Watson (announced his intention on 10 May 2015)¹²
- Ben Bradshaw (announced his intention on 15 May 2015)¹³
- Stella Creasy (announced her intention on 16 May 2015)¹⁴
- Caroline Flint (announced her intention on 16 May 2015)¹⁵
- Angela Eagle (announced her intention on 18 May 2015)¹⁶

⁶ 'Liz Kendall confirms Labour leadership bid', [BBC News](#), 10 May 2015

⁷ 'Chuka Umunna confirms he will run in Labour leadership race', [Labour List](#), 12 May 2015

⁸ 'Andy Burnham and Yvette Cooper announce Labour leadership bids', [Huffington Post](#), 13 May 2015

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ 'Labour leadership: Mary Creagh enters race', [BBC News](#), 14 May 2015

¹¹ 'Labour leadership: Jeremy Corbyn enters race', [BBC News](#), 3 June 2015

¹² 'Tom Watson reveals deputy leadership bid for Labour', [Channel 4 News](#), 10 May 2015

¹³ 'Deputy leadership', [Ben Bradshaw website](#), 15 May 2015

¹⁴ 'Stella Creasy confirms she's running for Labour deputy leader: "Party must return to fighting poverty, inequality and injustice"', [Mirror](#), 16 May 2015

¹⁵ 'Caroline Flint launches bid for Labour's deputy leadership', [New Statesman](#), 16 May 2015

¹⁶ 'Angela Eagle launches deputy leadership campaign', [Labour List](#), 18 May 2015

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- John Healey (announced his intention on 25 May 2015)¹⁷
- Rushanara Ali (announced her intention on 24 May 2015)¹⁸

John Healey withdrew his candidacy on 11 June and Rushanara Ali withdrew her candidacy on 17 June, the day nominations closed. The other five candidates received enough nominations (35 or more) to appear on the ballot paper.

The result of the election was declared on 12 September. Tom Watson was elected deputy leader of the Labour Party after three rounds of voting.

Labour deputy leadership election 2015: results

Candidate	Round 1	%	Round 2	%	Round 3	%
Tom Watson	160,852	39.4	170,589	42.2	198,962	50.7
Stella Creasy	78,100	19.1	86,555	21.4	103,746	26.4
Caroline Flint	64,425	15.8	74,581	18.4	89,538	22.8
Angela Eagle	66,013	16.2	72,517	17.9		
Ben Bradshaw	39,080	9.6				
Total	408,470		404,242		392,246	

Source: BBC News

¹⁷ 'John Healey announces deputy Labour leadership bid', [Huffington Post](#), 25 May 2015

¹⁸ 'Another new name enters deputy leadership race – Rushanara Ali announces she will run', [Labour List](#), 24 May 2015

3. Leadership contests 1922-2010

3.1 2010 Contest

The Labour leadership election process was put in train on 10 May 2010, whilst coalition talks between the Liberal Democrats and Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party were taking place, when Gordon Brown announced that:

The reason we have a hung parliament is no single party or leader was able to win the full support of the country. As leader of my party, I must accept that is a judgement on me.

I therefore intend to ask the Labour Party to set in train the processes needed for its own leadership election.

I would hope that it would be completed in time for the new leader to be in post by the time of the Labour Party conference. I will play no part in that contest, I will back no individual candidate.¹⁹

At that time, he had intended to continue as Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party until the outcome of the contest was known. However, on 11 May 2010, when it became apparent that the Labour Party would not be able to reach a coalition agreement with the Liberal Democrats, Gordon Brown announced that he would be resigning as Prime Minister and the Leader of the Labour Party with immediate effect.²⁰ Under the Labour Party's rules, its deputy leader, Harriet Harman, became acting Leader. She held office until a new leader was elected.²¹

At its meeting on 19 May 2010, the Labour Party National Executive Committee agreed a timetable for the conduct of the leadership election. The timetable was subsequently revised:

- Monday 24 May: Opening of PLP nominations.
- Wednesday 9 June: Close of PLP nominations. [Originally 12.30pm on Thursday 27 May 2010²²]
- Thursday 10 June: Deadline of acceptance of nomination by nominated candidates. Supporting nominations open.
- June/July: Hustings will take place. The Labour Party will work with a range of organisations to ensure regional balance and encourage affiliates and third party organisations to organise workplace hustings involving members and supporters. We will explore new media hustings to ensure the public are able to take part in the process.
- Monday 26 July: Close of supporting nominations.

¹⁹ Andy McSmith, "a day that began with Cameron in charge and ended with him in shock", *Independent*, 11 May 2010

²⁰ James Kirkup, "Brown says farewell to his 'second most important job'", *Daily Telegraph*, 12 May 2010

²¹ The Labour Party rules provide that:
"When the Party is in opposition and the Party leader, for whatever reason becomes permanently unavailable, the deputy leader shall automatically become Party leader on a pro-tem basis" [Labour Party, *Rule Book 2014*, Chapter 4, Clause II, E iv]

²² Michael Savage, "'Sons of Blair' do battle with 'Sons of Brown' for labour leadership", *Independent*, 20 May 2010; Michael Savage, "Diane Abbott adds name to leadership contenders", *Independent*, 21 May 2010

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- Monday 16 August to Wednesday 22 September: *Balloting takes place.*
- Wednesday 8 September: Freeze date for new members to join.
- Saturday 25 September: Announcement of ballot result.²³

Six candidates declared their intention to stand for the leadership of the Labour Party:

- David Miliband (announced his intention on 12 May 2010 and launched his campaign on 17 May 2010²⁴);
- Ed Miliband (announced his intention on 14 May 2010 and launched his campaign on 15 May 2010²⁵);
- Ed Balls (launched his campaign on 19 May 2010²⁶);
- John McDonnell (announced his intention on 18 May 2010 and confirmed his bid on 19 May 2010²⁷);
- Andy Burnham (launched his campaign on 20 May 2010²⁸)
- Diane Abbott (announced her intention on 20 May 2010²⁹)

John McDonnell withdrew his candidacy on 9 June, the day nominations closed. All five remaining candidates had received at least 33 nominations.

The results of the leadership contest were declared at the start of the Party's Annual Conference in Manchester, on Saturday 25 September 2010. Ed Miliband was elected leader by the Party's electoral college³⁰ under the alternative vote system. Four rounds of voting were required to determine the winner. The results for each round are included in Appendix 2.

3.2 2007 Contest

On the 10 May 2007, Tony Blair announced his decision to stand down from the leadership of the Labour Party, triggering a leadership contest. He also announced that he would resign as Prime Minister on 27 June 2007.³¹

²³ Source: Labour Party, NEC agrees timetable for election of new Leader, 19 May 2010 [revised on 20 May], posted on Labour Matters

²⁴ Jim Pickard, "Miliband throws his hat into ring for leader", *Financial Times*, 13 May 2010; Allegra Stratton, "Time to end Blair-Brown battles and repair Labour, says Miliband the elder", *Guardian*, 18 May 2010

²⁵ Jim Pickard, "Ed Miliband to challenge brother", *Financial Times*, 15 May 2010; Toby Helm, Anushka Asthana and Andrew Rawnsley, "New Labour is a thing of the past, says Miliband", *Observer*, 16 May 2010

²⁶ Michael Savage, "' Sons of Blair' do battle with 'Sons of Brown' for labour leadership", *Independent*, 20 May 2010

²⁷ Allegra Stratton and Patrick Wintour, "Burnham joins leadership race with pledge to act on immigration fears", *Guardian*, 20 May 2010; Allegra Stratton, "Ed Balls to join marathon party leadership race", *Guardian*, 19 May 2010

²⁸ Andy Burnham, "Why I am the man to rebuild Labour", *Mirror*, 20 May 2010

²⁹ [Diane Abbott enters Labour leadership contest](#), *BBC News*, 20 May 2010

³⁰ The votes of each of the following three groups receive equal weighting (one third) in the College: (1) Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament; (2) Constituency Labour Party members; and (3) Affiliates

³¹ Matthew Tempest, "Blair to stand down on June 27", *Guardian Unlimited*, 10 May 2007

On the same day, John Prescott also formally announced his decision to step down as deputy leader of the Labour Party.³²

These announcements heralded a leadership and deputy leadership contest under the rules set out in Appendix 1. The National Executive Committee of the Labour Party met on 13 May 2007 and agreed the detailed rules of the contest and the timetable, which were outlined by *Guardian Unlimited*:

- May 14: MP nominations open at 2.30pm
- May 17: Nominations close at 12.30pm.
- May 18: Deadline for nominated candidates to accept nomination.
- May 20: Hustings meetings (to June 16), even if there is only one candidate for leader, that candidate will attend around the country, but will not be subject to an affirmative ballot.
- June 1: Close of supporting nominations.
- Deadline for withdrawal of nomination by declared candidates.
- June 21: Close of affiliate ballot.
- June 22: Close of Labour members and MPs' and MEPs' ballots.
- June 24: Leadership conference and announcement of results at a special party conference in Manchester. If there is only one candidate for leader that person will be declared elected unopposed.³³

In order to go forward to the ballot, candidates for leadership had to receive nominations from 12.5% of the Commons members of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), that is 45 members.³⁴

Labour Leadership contest 2007

Having previously announced that he would not seek a fourth term as Prime Minister, in September 2004,³⁵ and that the 2006 Labour Party Conference would be his last as leader, in September 2006,³⁶ Tony Blair's formal announcement, on 10 May 2007, that he was standing down as party leader and Prime Minister was widely expected.

His announcement initiated the formal leadership contest, with Gordon Brown declaring his intention to stand as a candidate for Labour leader the following day.³⁷ Two other members of the PLP had already declared their intention to stand for the leadership: John McDonnell, in July 2006,³⁸ and Michael Meacher, in February 2007.³⁹

³² ['Prescott quits as deputy leader'](#), *BBC NEWS*, 10 May 2007

³³ Hélène Mulholland and Lewis Williamson, "Labour leadership: what happens next", *Guardian Unlimited*, 14 May 2007

³⁴ *Labour Party Rule Book 2004* Rule 4B.2b Nomination

³⁵ George Jones, "Blair has heart treatment today", *Daily Telegraph*, 1 October 2004

³⁶ Andrew Grice, "Blair buys time with pledge to quit within 12 months", *Independent*, 8 September 2006

³⁷ Deborah Summers and Hugh Muir, "Brown lays out leadership credentials", *Guardian Unlimited*, 11 May 2007

³⁸ Nick Assinder, "Labour MP launches leadership bid", *BBC News*, 14 July 2006

³⁹ Matthew Tempest and Tom Happold, "Meacher enters leadership race", *Guardian Unlimited*, 22 February 2007

After conceding that John McDonnell had secured more nominations than him, Mr Meacher withdrew his candidacy on 14 May 2007.⁴⁰ On 16 May, Gordon Brown secured his 308th nomination, making it mathematically impossible for John McDonnell, who had secured 29 nominations, to reach the required 45 nominations.⁴¹

The total nominations received by Gordon Brown, as at 14 June 2007, were:

MPs	MEPs	CLPs	Affiliates
313	19	407	17

Source:

http://www.labour.org.uk/leadership/labour_party_overwhelmingly_unites_behind_gordon_brown (last accessed July 2007)

At the close of nominations, Gordon Brown was declared the sole candidate for the leadership. He accepted the nomination in a speech on 17 May 2007.⁴² However, his formal appointment as Leader of the Labour Party was not made until the Special Conference on 24 June 2007.

Labour Deputy Leadership contest 2007

On 10 May 2007, Mr John Prescott also formally announced his decision to step down as deputy leader of the Labour Party.⁴³

At the Labour Party Conference in September 2006, John Prescott said that he would stand down as deputy leader of the Labour Party and Deputy Prime Minister when Tony Blair stood down.⁴⁴ By the time of his formal announcement, six MPs had already announced their intention to contest the Party's deputy leadership:

- Peter Hain announced his intention to stand on 12 September 2006;⁴⁵
- Harriet Harman announced her intention to stand on 15 September 2006;⁴⁶
- John Cruddas announced his intention to stand on 27 September 2006;⁴⁷
- Hilary Benn announced his intention to stand on 27 October 2006;⁴⁸
- Alan Johnson launched his campaign on 10 November 2006;⁴⁹
- Hazel Blears announced her intention to stand on 24 February 2007.⁵⁰

⁴⁰ Patrick Wintour and Will Woodward, "Key backing for Johnson in Labour deputy fight", *Guardian*, 15 May 2007

⁴¹ Patrick Wintour, "Brown secures Labour leadership unopposed", *Guardian*, 17 May 2007

⁴² Patrick Wintour, "Brown: Britain's two prime ministers", *Guardian*, 18 May 2007

⁴³ 'Prescott quits as deputy leader', *BBC NEWS*, 10 May 2007

⁴⁴ Colin Brown, "Tears and cheers as Prescott says he will bow out with Blair", *Independent*, 29 September 2006

⁴⁵ 'Hain runs as deputy leader', *BBC News*, 12 September 2006

⁴⁶ 'Harman intends Labour deputy bid', *BBC News*, 15 September 2006

⁴⁷ "Cruddas goes for Prezza job", *Birmingham Post*, 28 September 2006

⁴⁸ 'Benn to run for deputy position', *BBC News*, 27 October 2006

⁴⁹ 'Johnson starts deputy leader bid', *BBC News*, 10 November 2006

All six candidates received sufficient nominations from the Commons members of the PLP to progress to the nationwide ballot which closed on 22 June. The results of the contest were announced at the Labour Party's Special Conference on 24 June 2007, in Manchester:

Electoral college results (%)

Candidate	1st round	2nd round	3rd round	4th round	5th round	
Hilary Benn	16.40	18.22	22.33			
Hazel Blears	11.77					
Jon Cruddas	19.39	20.39	23.89	30.06		
Peter Hain	15.32	16.42				
Harriet Harman	18.93	21.23	25.88	33.58	50.43	ELECTED
Alan Johnson	18.16	23.74	27.90	26.35	49.56	

Source: http://www.labour.org.uk/leadership/deputy_leader_election_results (last accessed July 2007)

The breakdown of votes among the different components of the electoral college is reported in Appendix 3.

3.3 1994 Contest

At the 1993 party conference the voting procedures were altered to introduce the principle of 'One Member One Vote'. Trade unions and constituency Labour parties were required to ballot their members individually, with results being allocated proportionately. The weighting of votes in the electoral college was also changed to give each section (PLP, CLP and TU) a third of the share of votes.

21 July 1994

	PLP	CLP	TU	Total
Tony Blair	60.5	58.2	52.3	57.0
John Prescott	19.6	24.4	28.4	24.1
Margaret Beckett	19.9	17.4	19.3	18.9

Source: Harry Harmer, *The Longman Companion to: The Labour party 1900-1998*

3.4 Contests 1983-1992

At the 1981 party conference the voting procedure for the election of party leader and deputy leader was altered. The electorate was extended to include nominations for members of the constituency parties and trade unions. MPs were given 30% of the vote, the constituencies 30% and the trade unions 40%.

⁵⁰ ['Blears launches deputy leader bid'](#), *BBC News*, 24 February 2007

2 October 1983

	PLP (%)	CLP (%)	TU (%)	Total (%)
Neil Kinnock	14.778	27.452	29.042	71.272
Roy Hattersley	7.883	0.577	10.878	19.288
Eric Heffer	4.286	1.971	0.046	6.303
Peter Shore	3.103	0.000	0.033	3.137

2 October 1988

	PLP	CLP	TU	Total
Neil Kinnock	24.842	24.128	39.660	88.630
Tony Benn	5.158	5.872	0.340	11.370

Source: Harry Harmer, *The Longman Companion to: The Labour party 1900-1998*

18 July 1992

	PLP	CLP	TU	Total
John Smith	23.19	29.31	38.52	91
Bryan Gould	6.81	0.69	1.48	9

Source: Thomas Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party: Organisational Change since 1983*

3.5 Contests 1922-1980

Between 1922 and 1981, only members of the Parliamentary Party were eligible to vote for the leader and the deputy leader. Under Labour Party rules, elections took place annually whilst the party was in opposition, but only when vacancies arose if the party was in government.

Contested elections were required on eight occasions in this period:

21 November 1922

James Ramsay MacDonald	61
Joseph Clynes	56

3 December 1935

	1st Ballot	2 nd Ballot
Clement Atlee	58	88
Herbert Morrison	44	48
Arthur Greenwood	33	-

14 December 1955

Hugh Gaitskell	166
Aneurin Bevan	70

3 November 1960

Hugh Gaitskell	157
Harold Wilson	81

2 November 1961

Hugh Gaitskell	171
Anthony Greenwood	59

14 February 1963

	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot
Harold Wilson	115	144
George Brown	88	103
James Callaghan	41	-

5 April 1976

	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot	3 rd Ballot
James Callaghan	84	141	176
Michael Foot	90	133	137
Roy Jenkins	56	-	-
Tony Benn	37	-	-
Denis Healey	30	38	-
Anthony Crosland	17	-	-

3 November 1980

	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot
Michael Foot	83	139
Denis Healey	112	129
John Silkin	38	-
Peter Shore	32	-

Source: Harry Harmer, *The Longman Companion to: The Labour party 1900-1998*

3.6 Further reading

Timothy Heppell, *Choosing the Labour Leader: Labour Party Leadership Elections from Wilson to Brown*, Tauris Academic Studies, 2010

Appendices

1. Previous leadership election rules

The rules used for previous leadership elections in the Labour Party were set out in the Party's *Rule Book 2010*.⁵¹ They specify:

[4B.2] Election of leader and deputy leader

A The leader and deputy shall be elected separately in accordance with rule C below, unless E applies.

B Nomination

(i) In the case of a vacancy for leader or deputy leader, each nomination must be supported by 12.5 per cent of the Commons members of the PLP (Parliamentary Labour Party). Nominations not attaining this threshold shall be null and void.

(ii) Where there is no vacancy, nominations shall be sought each year prior to the annual session of party conference. In this case any nomination must be supported by 20 per cent of the Commons members of the PLP. Nominations not attaining this threshold shall be null and void.

(iii) Affiliated organisations, CLPs (Constituency Labour Party) and Labour Members of the European Parliament may also nominate for each of the offices of leader and deputy leader. All nominees must be Commons members of the PLP.

(iv) Nominees shall inform the General Secretary in writing of the acceptance or otherwise of their nomination at least two clear weeks before the commencement of the procedures for voting laid out in rule C below. Unless written consent to nomination is received, nominations shall be rendered null and void.

(v) Valid nominations shall be printed in the final agenda for party conference, together with the names of the nominating organisations and Commons members of the PLP supporting the nominations. In the case of a vacancy under 4B.2e this information shall be included with the documentation circulated with any ballot.

(vi) Nominees who do not attend the relevant party conference shall be deemed to have withdrawn their nominations, unless they send to the secretary - on or before the day on which the conference opens - an explanation in writing of their absence satisfactory to the CAC (Conference Arrangements Committee).

C Voting

(i) Voting in the election of leader and deputy leader shall take place so that the results are declared at an annual session of party conference; except in the case of a vacancy occurring under E below of this rule when the timetable for the ballot shall be as determined by the NEC.

(ii) Voting shall take place consecutively in three sections as follows;

(a) Section 1 shall consist of Commons members of the PLP and members of the European PLP. Each such member shall be

⁵¹ Labour Party, *Rule Book 2010*, pp21-22

entitled to one vote in each ballot held under this section of the rules.

(b) Section 2 shall consist of a vote of all eligible individual members of the party on the basis of one member one vote. This ballot shall take place on a national basis and shall be counted and recorded as an aggregate vote broken down by CLP. Eligible members shall be those currently on the national membership list who are endorsed and have not lapsed from membership.

(c) Section 3 shall consist of those members of affiliated organisations who have indicated their support for the Labour Party and that they are not members or supporters of any other party or otherwise ineligible to be members of the Labour Party. Voting shall take place under the procedures of each affiliated organisation, but on a one-person-one-vote basis recorded by affiliated organisations and aggregated for a national total. The ballot paper shall provide for the declaration of support and eligibility required under this rule if no prior declaration has been made.

(iii) The votes of each nominee in each section shall be calculated as a percentage of the total votes cast in that section and shall then be apportioned as follows:

(a) Section 1 (members of the Commons and European PLPs) – one third

(b) Section 2 (individual members of the Labour Party) – one third

(c) Section 3 (members of affiliated organisations) – one third.

(iv) The votes apportioned as provided in (iii) above shall be totaled and the candidate receiving more than half of the votes so apportioned shall be declared elected. If no candidate reaches this total on the first ballot, further ballots shall be held on an elimination basis. The redistribution of votes shall be according to preferences indicated on the ballot paper.

(v) The votes cast for each nominee in each section shall be recorded and published in a form to be determined by the NEC as soon as possible following any election.

D Timing of an election

(i) When the PLP is in opposition in the House of Commons, the election of the leader and deputy leader shall take place at each annual session of party conference.

(ii) When the PLP is in government and the leader and/or deputy leader are prime minister and/or in Cabinet, an election shall proceed only if requested by a majority of party conference on a card vote.

(iii) In any other circumstances an election shall only be held when a vacancy occurs, subject to E below.

E Procedure in a vacancy

(i) When the party is in government and the party leader is prime minister and the party leader, for whatever reason, becomes permanently unavailable, the cabinet shall, in consultation with the NEC, appoint one of its members to serve as party leader until a ballot under these rules can be carried out.

(ii) When the party is in government and the deputy leader becomes party leader under (i) above of this rule, the Cabinet may, in consultation with the NEC, appoint one of its members to

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serve as deputy leader until the next party conference. The Cabinet may alternatively, in consultation with the NEC, leave the post vacant until the next party conference.

(iii) When the party is in government and the deputy leader, for whatever reason, becomes permanently unavailable, the Cabinet may, in consultation with the NEC, appoint one of its members to serve as deputy leader until the next party conference. The Cabinet may alternatively, in consultation with the NEC, leave the post vacant until the next party conference.

(iv) When the party is in opposition and the party leader, for whatever reason, becomes permanently unavailable, the deputy leader shall automatically become party leader on a pro-tem basis. The NEC shall decide whether to hold an immediate ballot as provided under E above or to elect a new leader at the next annual session of party conference.

(v) When the party is in opposition and the leader and deputy leader, for whatever reason, both become permanently unavailable, the NEC shall order a postal ballot as provided under E above. In consultation with the Shadow Cabinet they may choose to appoint a member of the Shadow Cabinet to serve as party leader until the outcome of that ballot.

2. 2010 leadership election results

(Percentage shares)

Round 1

	MPs/MEPs	Members	Affiliates	Total
Abbott	0.88	2.45	4.09	7.42
Balls	5.01	3.37	3.41	11.79
Burnham	3.01	2.85	2.83	8.68
Miliband D	13.91	14.69	9.18	37.78
Miliband E	10.53	9.98	13.82	34.33
Total	33.33	33.33	33.33	100.00

Round 2

Balls	5.18	3.83	4.22	13.23
Burnham	3.03	3.30	4.08	10.41
Miliband D	14.02	15.08	9.80	38.89
Miliband E	11.11	11.13	15.23	37.47

Round 3

Balls	5.43	4.82	5.77	16.02
Miliband D	15.78	16.08	10.86	42.72
Miliband E	12.12	12.43	16.71	41.26

Round 4

Miliband D	17.81	18.14	13.40	49.35
Miliband E	15.52	15.20	19.93	50.65

Source: Labour Party, [Summary of voting by round](#)

3. 2007 deputy leadership election results

(Percentage shares)

Round 1

	MPs/MEPs	Members	Affiliates	Total
Benn	4.27	7.21	4.93	16.41
Blears	4.99	3.01	3.77	11.77
Cruddas	4.63	5.67	9.09	19.39
Hain	4.81	3.87	6.64	15.32
Harman	6.54	8.04	4.35	18.93
Johnson	8.08	5.53	4.55	18.16

Round 2

Benn	4.74	7.93	5.56	18.23
Cruddas	4.74	6.01	9.64	20.39
Hain	5.10	4.24	7.08	16.42
Harman	7.29	8.80	5.15	21.24
Johnson	11.47	6.35	5.91	23.73

Round 3

Benn	5.65	9.29	7.39	22.33
Cruddas	6.30	6.58	11.01	23.89
Harman	8.61	10.15	7.12	25.88
Johnson	12.78	7.31	7.81	27.90

Round 4

Cruddas	7.65	8.81	13.61	30.07
Harman	10.29	13.82	9.46	33.57
Johnson	15.39	10.71	10.25	36.35

Round 5

Harman	15.42	18.83	16.18	50.43
Johnson	17.91	14.50	17.15	49.56

Source: *The Guardian*, 25 June 2007

4. Labour party leaders 1906 – present

1906-08	Keir Hardie
1908-10	Arthur Henderson
1910-11	George Barnes
1911-14	James Ramsay MacDonald
1914-17	Arthur Henderson
1917-21	William Adamson
1921-22	Joseph Clynes
1922-31	James Ramsay MacDonald
1931-32	Arthur Henderson
1932-35	George Lansbury
1935-55	Clement Attlee
1955-63	Hugh Gaitskill

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1963-76	Harold Wilson
1976-80	James Callaghan
1980-83	Michael Foot
1983-92	Neil Kinnock
1992-94	John Smith
1994-07	Tony Blair
2007-10	Gordon Brown
2010-15	Ed Miliband
2015- present	Jeremy Corbyn

Source: Harry Harmer, *The Longman Companion to: The Labour Party 1900-1998*

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