

Rajya Sabha- YP2020

What Comprises the Rajya Sabha?

- One of the two houses of the Indian Parliament
- Often known as the ‘Upper House’ of the Parliament or the Council of States
- Membership limited to 250 members by the Constitution
- Present Rajya Sabha has 245 members
- Lok Sabha- members are directly elected by the citizens
- Rajya Sabha- members elected by State Legislative Assemblies
- Additionally, 12 accomplished individuals from the fields of art, literature, science and social services are granted membership by the President
- Presided over by Chairperson, the country’s Vice President (currently Shri Venkaiah Naidu) , and in his/her absence, the Vice Chairperson

Why is it Important?

- Represents the voice of the States in the Union (central) Legislation (law making body)
- Equal footing with the Lok Sabha on deciding most **bills** (proposals for laws) proposed in Parliament, except money bills
- Makes laws on subjects in the '**State List**' (a list of topics and areas on which laws and decisions are to be enforced by the State governments)
- A single State reserves the power to make laws for citizens within its territory (while the central government makes laws affecting all citizens)
- Union/ central government **may not** pass laws on these subjects without the approval of the Rajya Sabha
- This permission is granted by passing a **resolution** (decision) with **two thirds** majority
- Thus, Rajya Sabha protects each State's culture and interests

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Roll Call

The executive board will be taking your attendance before the sessions starts through roll call
The members have to give in their attendance as “Present”.

Opening Statements

Every member must give their opening statement before the house during the 1st session.

An opening statement of the member should ideally contain their party’s and personal (in capacity of Member of Parliament) stand on the main agenda.

Opening statements should ideally not exceed 2 minutes.

Short Period Discussions

Members can initiate Short Period Discussions on various issues concerning the main agenda. The house will move into Short Period Discussions as soon as it gets over with Opening Statements of the Members.

Any member can propose a topic for the Short Period Discussion which will be put to a placard vote

It would require a simple majority to be adopted as the topic for the short period of discussion.

Although there is no set time defined for a short period of discussion, it should ideally not exceed 20-25 minutes.

Question hour

This is where the delegates can ask questions that they wanted to raise during opening statements or short period discussions

Essentially these questions will be collected in the form of chits so the delegates need to send in their questions during or after the opening statements and discussions.

Zero Hour

Members wishing to raise matters of public importance during the “Zero Hour” need to give notice to the Executive Board before the Zero hour starts. The notice should clearly state the subjects they want to raise (which must relate to recent events, as well as fall under the purview of the agenda) The executive board is the final authority who can either reject or accept such request.

Minimum 15 and maximum 20 matters will be allowed to be raised during the Zero Hour. Again, it is the executive board who decides which subjects are to be discussed and in what order. The total time allocated for Zero Hour would ideally be 45 minutes – 1 hour wherein a member gets three minutes to raise the issue. Moreover, a member is allowed to make only one Zero Hour request.

General Instructions

Language: Lok Sabha would be a bilingual committee wherein members can speak either in Hindi or in English.

Reports: Only Governmental/Parliamentary/Law Commission reports would be taken as official. Any other Newspaper reports, International Reports, NGO findings/Studies etc. can be brought up for debate but would hold

no official value.

Points: The members would have 4 points –

- i) Point of Personal Privilege- to point out any physical discomfort they are facing
- ii) Point of Order – to point out procedural errors or factual inaccuracies i
- iii) Point of Parliamentary Inquiry- to ask any procedural doubts to the Lok Sabha Executive board.
- iv) Right to yield- to Executive board or to another delegate.

Writing Chits

- **To Executive board**

- Parliamentary enquiries can be sent through the EB via chit.

- If delegates are not able to say certain important points during their verbal statements, then they can send it via chit. -Other statements or press releases can be sent via chit which will be read out in committee.

- **To another delegate**

- **To another delegate via executive board.**

- Communiques: The delegates can communicate to each other via communiques. They have an option to route the communiques through the executive board. These communications can include questions, interjections etc.

- Please only route the chits through EB if you have any substantial points that you want the EB to take note of.

Parliamentary Etiquette

- It is a bilingual committee. Delegates can use both Hindi and English during verbal statements. However, all committee documentation and chits must be in English.
- To ask for any clarification and question, raise your placard and wait for recognition by the executive board. Delegates may request to approach the dias in the same manner. Such points are called points of parliamentary enquiry.
- Delegates are required to raise points of personal privilege if they are unable to hear a fellow delegate or have any issue with respect to personal comfort in committee.
- While addressing delegates in committee, please refer to them as per their allotted portfolio. For instance, while addressing say Narendra Modi, you will be required to say Shri Narendra Modi as courtesy in the committee.
- There are three members in the Executive Board, while addressing any of them during committee session you are required to have formal and respectful conduct.
- After getting recognized by the EB for verbal statements etc, remember to thank the EB for recognition.
- Maintaining diplomacy during all discussions, even while responding to questions is key.
- You are required to ask for permission to reply to a question (plead to respond) and for asking follow up questions etc. (plead to follow up). You may proceed if EB grants permission.

Raising Motions

I, _____, would like to raise a motion to move into a _____ for total time _____ and individual speaker's time _____ on the topic _____.

- Begin debate
- Adjourn debate
- Informal session
- To discuss amendments
- For voting on final committee documentation
- Formal sessions- subject discussions, zero hour and question hour

Parties in Indian Politics

- A **political alliance**, also known as a coalition or bloc, is cooperation by members of different **political** parties, in countries with a parliamentary system, on a common agenda of some kind
- There are currently two major alliances in Indian politics:
 - National Democratic Alliance (NDA)- a coalition of **right wing** political parties, such as BJP, Janata Dal (United) , National People's Party etc; currently in power in the central government
 - United Progressive Alliance (UPA)- a **coalition** of **left** and **centre-left** political parties, such as Congress (INC), Rashtriya Janata Dal, Indian Union Muslim League

Knowing your Portfolio and Party

- You must know the party that your portfolio is a member of or is aligned with (may not be a member of the party, but shares their ideology)
- Find out which alliance, if any, your party is a part of, and hence their ideology as well
- You must also know about the other members of the alliance, on order to find support in the committee
- Have an understanding of the stand your party and portfolio takes on various matters in the country such as religion, education, censorship etc
- If you have been elected, know the basics of your State, the way it is affected by the situation, and what it has done with regards to it
- If you control, or are a part of a certain ministry, understand its functions and jurisdiction

Knowing the Opposition

- It is equally important to understand the political ideology of all parties aside from yours that have been represented in the House
- This also includes their reactions to similar events in the past
- Knowledge of the actions taken and statements made by these parties are important in order to pose relevant questions, and identify problems in their suggestions and solutions
- Most importantly, you must know the major differences between the stand taken by your parties and others, in order to ensure that you do not make a statement in support of the opposition
- **You cannot speak against your party, it's aims, policies or the actions it has taken so far, at any time during the committee. This will result in negative marking**

Researching for the Agenda

- Carefully read through the entire background guide
- Ensure that you have understood all the terminology used
- Pick up on subheadings and questions given in the guide and read about them further
- Know the stand your party has taken on the issue as a whole, and on each of its parts individually
- Know the actions taken and speeches given already by the person you are representing on this, and similar issues

Sources of Information

- Informal sites such as *wikipedia* or news articles may be used for understanding but cannot be quoted formally in committee
- credible sites whose reports are accepted in the committee.
 - Amnesty International.
 - AlJazeera.
 - BBC.
 - UN Official Site.
 - Government's Official Site.
 - Reuters.
- It may be a good idea to bring a copy of any document you wish to quote in committee

Preparing for Debate

- Once you have understood the agenda, you must decide what topics you find relevant enough to devote time to in committee
- Frame motions that can be raised for the same, and prepare certain solutions that you can propose when speaking about the topics
- Have a good grasp of the stand taken by the opposition, and the steps taken by them
- These may be referenced in speeches, or brought up during Question Hour
- It is also a good idea to prepare a few questions beforehand for specific members/ parties in the committee

- It is important that you have relevant suggestions in mind that help conclude the issue
- Various solutions have already been proposed by politicians, academicians, and journalists, while others may emerge through debate in committee
- Similar situations in India and across the globe may also provide solutions
- Ensure that you have reasons to justify any solutions you propose
- Ensure that these solutions can also be implemented practically
- These suggestions and solutions must also be aligned with your party's manifesto (policies and aims) and its political ideology

Speaking in Committee

- Always wait to be called on by the Executive Board before addressing the committee
- Address members of the Executive Board and fellow delegates courteously, keeping in mind the formality of the situation
- When addressing committee, maintain a formal body language- avoid too much movement, avoid putting hands in pockets
- Make sure that you are speaking clearly and slowly enough to be understood, rather than rushing through your points
- Attempt to be audible to the entire room
- Do not interrupt or cross talk while other delegates are speaking

Asking Questions

- Questions must be addressed directly to another member of the House
- They must pertain to the agenda at hand
- They must be as short and succinct as possible
- They may not be used to make statements or point out factual inaccuracies in another member's statement
- Attempt to ask questions that will help further the debate rather than simply find shortcomings in a delegate's research
- Do not interrupt or attempt to follow up while the question is still being answered
- Use what was said in the previous answer when framing a follow up question

Opening Statements

- Each member is required to give an opening statement
- It is your first contribution to the committee and must be both informed and empathetic
- Ensure that this has been prepared and practiced before committee starts
- Ideally between 1 and 2 minutes long (it is a good idea to time yourself when practising)
- **No part of these statements should be plagiarised** either from the guide or from any other online resources unless quoting a specific study or report with acknowledgement
- You are **not** required to learn this speech, but should be comfortable with its delivery

Writing an Opening Statement

- Briefly describe the issue at hand (do not spend time discussing the meaning of the agenda or providing introductions to the portfolio)
- Recognize the importance of discussing this particular issue (may give evidence to show the impact/ effects of the issue)
- Discuss your (portfolio/party's) stand on the issue, and what your contribution has been so far
- Justify this stand by giving evidence and reasons in support of it
- Propose practical solutions and suggestions to tackle the situation
- Conclude by urging members to take or not take steps in a certain direction based on the arguments you have given