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Parliament: Composition, Elections and Sessions

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Parliament: Composition, Elections and Sessions

India's Parliament has two Houses, and they are built very differently. Voters elect one directly. State legislatures elect the other. This lesson shows how each House is put together, how members get in and can lose their seats, and how the Houses work together even when they disagree. It ends with a real Rajya Sabha poll from March 2026.

> **Lok Sabha** Direct election. Five-year term.
> **Rajya Sabha** Elected by states. Permanent. One-third retires every two years.
> **Joint sitting** Only for ordinary bills. Speaker presides.
> **Only three** Joint sittings held: 1961, 1978, 2002.

Single transferable vote: Voting method used to elect Rajya Sabha members.

Office of profit: A paid government post that can disqualify an MP.

Whip: A party order on how to vote.

Deadlock: Houses cannot agree on a bill.

1 Chapter 1: The Lok Sabha

Must Know

The House of the People

- Voters elect Lok Sabha members **directly**.
- Each territorial constituency sends one member.

- The same election decides which party forms the government.
- The normal term is **five years**.
- It can be dissolved earlier. For example, when no party or coalition can command a majority.
- Its members face re-election, so it is the House most answerable to the public.

Its stronger hand

- Only the Lok Sabha can pass Money Bills.
- Only the Lok Sabha can vote no confidence in the Council of Ministers.
- So it holds the stronger hand on money and on forming or removing a government.

Who presides

- The Lok Sabha elects its own Speaker from among its members.
- The Speaker decides procedure and keeps order.
- The Speaker also presides over any joint sitting of both Houses.
- Exams test this detail directly.
- Read more: The Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

Remember: Lok Sabha: direct election, five years, Speaker presides, Money Bills and no confidence.

2 Chapter 2: The Rajya Sabha

Must Know

The Council of States

- State legislative assemblies elect Rajya Sabha members.

- They use proportional representation through a **single transferable vote**.
- Citizens do not vote for them directly.

A House that never dissolves

- The Rajya Sabha is a permanent body.
- **One-third** of its members retire every two years.
- Elections replace only that third.
- The Constituent Assembly built this in on purpose.
- The House never faces a full turnover like the Lok Sabha does after dissolution.
- It can take a longer-term view and feels less electoral pressure.
- Parliament is never left without a working House.

Who presides

- The Vice-President is the Rajya Sabha's Chairman by virtue of that office.
- The House does not elect the Chairman separately.

Remember: Rajya Sabha: indirect election, permanent, one-third retires every two years, Vice-President presides.

> **Quick check 1.** One-third of the Rajya Sabha's members retire every two years. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

3 Chapter 3: Two Election Methods

Good to Know

Direct and indirect

- Lok Sabha voters use the first-past-the-post system in each constituency.
- Rajya Sabha members are elected by state assembly members using proportional representation and the single transferable vote.
- Rajya Sabha seats go to states roughly by population, under the Fourth Schedule.
- Among the states in one CAPF question: Tamil Nadu has 18 seats, West Bengal 16, Karnataka 12 and Rajasthan 10.
- Larger states such as Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra have more.
- Different elections and different timing mean one party can control one House without the other.

Equal power, and more power

- The Rajya Sabha has equal power with the Lok Sabha in **amending the Constitution**.

- Article 368 needs passage in each House separately, by a special majority.
- On new All India Services, it has **more** power. Under Article 312, the Rajya Sabha alone passes the enabling resolution.
- It has no role in removing the government.
- It has no role in cut motions.

> **Quick check 2.** The Rajya Sabha has more power than the Lok Sabha in removing the government. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

4 Chapter 4: Becoming and Ceasing to Be an MP

Good to Know

Who can stand

- An MP must be an Indian citizen.
- The minimum age is **25** for the Lok Sabha and **30** for the Rajya Sabha.
- The candidate must be registered as an elector somewhere in India.

How a member is disqualified

- Holding an "**office of profit**" under the government can disqualify a member.
- That means a paid post carrying real influence or income, unless Parliament has exempted it.
- A member who gives up party membership voluntarily, or defies the whip, risks disqualification.
- This is the anti-defection law of the Tenth Schedule.

- It keeps MPs loyal to the party voters chose, and free from being quietly bought.

Speech inside the House

- Article 105 gives MPs freedom of speech in Parliament.
- They cannot be sued or prosecuted for what they say or how they vote inside the House.
- The aim is candid debate without fear.

The 2024 bribery ruling

- In March 2024, a seven-judge bench decided *Sita Soren v. Union of India*.
- It held that this immunity does not cover bribery.
- An MP who takes a bribe can still be prosecuted, even if they vote as agreed.
- It overturned the 1998 JMM bribery ruling, which had protected legislators who voted as bribed.

State legislatures

- Most states have one House, a Legislative Assembly.
- A few also have a Legislative Council, an indirectly elected upper House.
- Under Article 169, Parliament can create or abolish a Council by ordinary law.
- The state assembly must first pass a resolution by special majority.
- So a Council is optional. The Rajya Sabha is permanent.
- Read more: Article 85: Prorogation and Dissolution of Parliament.

Quick check 3. The 2024 Sita Soren ruling held that parliamentary immunity does not extend to bribery. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Think it through: Think it through: why have two Houses with different election methods?

One House answers directly to voters. The other answers to the states and never resets fully. Together they balance quick public mood against longer-term state interests.

5 Chapter 5: Joint Sittings

Great to Know

When does one happen?

- A joint sitting breaks a real deadlock on an **ordinary bill**.
- This happens when one House rejects what the other passed.
- It also happens when the Houses cannot agree on amendments.
- Or when the other House holds the bill for more than six months.
- Article 108 built the mechanism in.

How it works

- The Lok Sabha Speaker presides.
- The outcome is decided by a majority of members present and voting, in both Houses together.
- The Lok Sabha is much bigger.
- So a joint sitting tends to favour the Lok Sabha majority.

What never goes to a joint sitting

- **Money Bills.** The Lok Sabha settles them alone.
- **Constitutional amendment bills.** Each House must pass them separately under Article 368.

Only three, ever

- **1961:** the Dowry Prohibition Bill. President Rajendra Prasad summoned it. It produced the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
- **1978:** the Banking Service Commission (Repeal) Bill. The Rajya Sabha had rejected it outright.
- **2002:** the Prevention of Terrorism Bill (POTA). It passed by 425 votes to 296.
- Most bills pass in one House and get accepted by the other.
- So a joint sitting is a last resort.

> **Quick check 4.** Money Bills and constitutional amendment bills can be sent to a joint sitting. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

6 Chapter 6: In the News, March 2026

Current Affairs

Cross-voting in the Odisha Rajya Sabha polls

- On **16 March 2026**, the Odisha Assembly voted for four Rajya Sabha seats.
- This is a live example of indirect election.
- Eight BJD MLAs and three Congress legislators cross-voted for the ruling party's candidates.
- That helped independent candidate Dilip Ray win a seat.

- On **21 March 2026**, the BJD's Political Affairs Committee, chaired by Naveen Patnaik, suspended six of its own MLAs.
- It acted after reviewing their replies to show-cause notices.
- (Source: The Print.)
- Read more: Parliamentary Committees in India and Parliamentary Questions.

7 Previous Year Questions

Exam angle: real questions on this topic.

> **Asked before**
>
> **PYQ 1 · UPSC CSP 2020, Q2**
>
> Rajya Sabha has equal powers with Lok Sabha in
>
> (a) the matter of creating new All India Services
> (b) amending the Constitution
> (c) the removal of the government
> (d) making cut motions
>
> mcqquestion.com/articles/upsc-csp-2020-general-studies-paper-i-full-question-paper/#q2

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Quick Q&A

- **Lok Sabha term?** Five years.
- **Minimum age RS?** 30.
- **Rajya Sabha retire?** One-third every two years.
- **Joint sittings held?** Three: 1961, 1978, 2002.
- **Sita Soren year?** March 2024.

Practice MCQs

1. Who among the following was appointed as the first Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha?

A. GV Mavalankar

B. M Ananthasayanam Ayyangar

C. Vithalbhai J Patel

D. V Narahari Rao

See answer ↓

2. What does Article 93 itself require of the Lok Sabha?

A. To let the President nominate the Speaker directly

B. To remove a Speaker within 14 days of a no-confidence resolution

C. To choose two of its own members as Speaker and Deputy Speaker, "as soon as may be"

D. To hold a fresh Speaker election every five years, regardless of dissolution

See answer ↓

3. The Speaker's removal, by a majority resolution with 14 days' notice, is governed by which Article, not Article 93?

A. Article 100

B. Article 96

C. Article 143

D. Article 94

See answer ↓

4. When the Lok Sabha is dissolved, what happens to the sitting Speaker's office?

A. The Speaker vacates office immediately, on the date of dissolution

B. The Speaker's office is taken over by the Vice-President until a new House meets

C. The Speaker continues in office until just before the new House's first meeting

D. The office remains vacant until the new Lok Sabha elects a fresh Speaker

See answer ↓

5. Which one of the following Parliamentary Committees has all its members from the Lok Sabha only, with no Rajya Sabha representation?

A. Estimates Committee

B. Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

C. Public Accounts Committee

D. Committee on Public Undertakings

See answer ↓

6. A starred question in the Indian Parliament is one that gets which kind of answer?

A. An oral answer, with supplementary questions allowed

B. An answer only from the Prime Minister personally

C. A written answer, with no supplementary questions allowed

D. No answer at all until the next session

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.** M Ananthasayanam Ayyangar was appointed as the first Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, later going on to become Speaker himself. ↑ Q1
2. **C.** The correct answer is **to choose two of its own members as Speaker and Deputy Speaker**. Article 93 says the House does this "as soon as may be". It gives no number of days. Memory hook: Article 93 creates the two offices. ↑ Q2
3. **D.** The correct answer is **Article 94**. It covers vacating the office, resignation and removal. Removal needs a majority of all the then members and at least fourteen days' notice. Memory hook: Article 93 creates, Article 94 ends. ↑ Q3
4. **C.** The correct answer is that **the Speaker stays until just before the new House first meets**. The proviso to Article 94 says so. This keeps the chair filled between two Houses. Memory hook: the Speaker outlasts dissolution. ↑ Q4
5. **A.** The Estimates Committee has 30 members, all drawn from the Lok Sabha only. The other three committees listed all include Rajya Sabha members alongside Lok Sabha members.

   ↑ Q5
6. **A.** A starred question, marked with an asterisk, gets an oral answer on the floor of the House, and MPs may ask follow-up supplementary questions on it.

   ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3
4. **False.** ↑ 4

Previous year answers

1. **(b) amending the Constitution** Article 368 requires passage in each House separately by special majority, with no override, so the Houses are equal there. On creating new All India Services, the Rajya Sabha actually has MORE power, not merely equal power, under Article 312.

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