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Parliamentary Committees in India

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The Lok Sabha, whose members staff most Parliamentary Committees. Photo: Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs / Wikimedia Commons, Government Open Data License – India.

Parliament can't examine every Bill, budget line, and ministry on the floor of the House. So it hands the real scrutiny work to committees — some permanent, some built for a single task, then dissolved.

> **Public Accounts Committee** 22 members, checks past spending. Chaired by the Opposition since 1967.
> **Estimates Committee** 30 members, all from the Lok Sabha. No Rajya Sabha seats at all.
> **24 Departmental Committees** One shadowing nearly every central ministry, reconstituted after each election.
> **No Minister on key panels** A sitting Minister can't sit on the financial committees or the Departmental Committees, not even their own.

Standing Committee: A permanent body, reconstituted regularly, that keeps working across sessions — like the PAC or Estimates Committee.

Ad hoc Committee: A committee built for one specific task, such as reviewing a single Bill, which dissolves once that task is done.

DRSC: A Departmentally Related Standing Committee — one of 24 bodies, each shadowing a specific set of ministries.

JPC: A Joint Parliamentary Committee, an ad hoc body with members from both Houses, formed to examine one Bill or issue.

1 Standing vs ad hoc, and the money committees

Must Know

1.1 What's the difference between a Standing and an Ad hoc Committee?

Some committees never stop working. The Public Accounts Committee, the Estimates Committee, and the Committee on Public Undertakings are all permanent bodies. They get rebuilt on a regular cycle, but they never actually shut down. Those are Standing Committees.

Others exist for exactly one job. A Select or Joint Committee formed to study a single Bill only exists until that Bill is disposed of. Once the report is in, the committee is gone. That's an Ad hoc Committee. The test for telling them apart is simple: is it tied to one Bill, or is it a recurring watchdog that keeps working year after year? One Bill means ad hoc. Recurring means standing.

Quick check 1. The Estimates Committee is an ad hoc committee, while the Railway Convention Committee is a standing committee. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Must Know

1.2 What do the three Financial Committees actually do?

Three committees exist purely to watch the money. The Public Accounts Committee has 22 members, 15 from the Lok Sabha and 7 from the Rajya Sabha, each serving a one-year term. It checks spending after the money is already gone, using the CAG's audit reports as its evidence.

The Estimates Committee looks the other way in time. It has 30 members, and every single one comes from the Lok Sabha, with no Rajya Sabha seats at all. Its job is studying future budget estimates and suggesting where money could be saved before it's spent. The Committee on Public Undertakings, 22 members again split 15 and 7, checks the reports and accounts of public sector companies.

One rule binds all three, and the Departmental Committees too: no sitting Minister can sit on any of them, not even the one that oversees their own ministry. Some other committees differ. The Rajya Sabha General Purposes Committee, for example, includes the Leader of the House, who is a Minister.

Quick check 2. Every one of Parliament's three Financial Committees includes Rajya Sabha members. *(True or False?)*

See answer ↓

2 The 24 DRSCs and who leads what

Good to Know

2.1 What are the 24 Departmentally Related Standing Committees?

Between them, 24 Departmentally Related Standing Committees, or DRSCs, cover every central ministry and department. They were reorganised into their current shape in 2004, replacing an earlier set of just 17.

Each DRSC seats 31 members: 21 from the Lok Sabha, picked by the Speaker, and 10 from the Rajya Sabha, picked by the Chairman, each serving a one-year term. Sixteen of the 24 DRSCs run under the Lok Sabha Secretariat; the other eight run under the Rajya Sabha Secretariat. Each committee shadows a specific set of ministries, and that's exactly where exams like to press: not just how many DRSCs exist, but which ministries a named committee actually covers.

Show the full list of all 24 DRSCs and what each one covers

- **Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing** — Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
- **Chemicals and Fertilizers** — Chemicals and Fertilizers
- **Coal, Mines and Steel** — Coal; Steel
- **Commerce** — Commerce and Industry; Textiles
- **Defence** — Defence
- **Energy** — Power; New and Renewable Energy
- **External Affairs** — External Affairs
- **Finance** — Finance; Corporate Affairs
- **Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution** — Food Processing; Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution
- **Health and Family Welfare** — Health; AYUSH
- **Home Affairs** — Home Affairs
- **Human Resource Development** — Education
- **Industry** — Heavy Industries; MSME
- **Information Technology** — Communications and IT
- **Labour, Textiles and Skill Development** — Labour and Employment
- **Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice** — Law and Justice; Personnel and Public Grievances
- **Petroleum and Natural Gas** — Petroleum and Natural Gas
- **Railways** — Railways
- **Rural Development and Panchayati Raj** — Rural Development; Panchayati Raj
- **Science and Technology, Environment and Forests** — Science and Technology; Environment, Forests and Climate

Change

- **Social Justice and Empowerment** — Social Justice and Empowerment; Tribal Affairs
- **Transport, Tourism and Culture** — Road Transport and Highways; Civil Aviation; Tourism; Culture
- **Urban Development** — Housing and Urban Affairs
- **Water Resources** — Jal Shakti (Water Resources)

Good to Know

2.2 Why does the Opposition chair the PAC while the ruling party chairs the Estimates Committee?

Since 1967, the PAC Chairperson has by convention come from the Opposition, a Speaker-appointed post, not one the committee's own members elect. The Estimates Committee runs on the opposite convention: its Chairman comes from the ruling party.

Think it through: why the opposite conventions?

The two committees look at spending from opposite ends of time. The PAC checks money the government has already spent. It's an audit of past decisions, using the CAG's findings. Handing that job to the Opposition gives the check real teeth, since the ruling party has an obvious reason to go easy on its own record. The Estimates Committee looks the other way, at future spending plans, and suggests ways to save money before it goes out. That's closer to planning than to an audit, so it stays with the side already in charge of running things. Exams often swap this pairing, so it helps to remember both halves together, not one at a time.

Quick check 3. The Public Accounts Committee Chairperson is, by convention, always from the ruling party. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

3 Other committees

Great to Know

3.1 What about SC/ST welfare and delegated legislation?

The Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has 30 members, 20 from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha. Its Chairperson is picked by the Lok Sabha Speaker from among the committee's own members, not by the Rajya Sabha Chairman, which is the trap version of this fact.

A different, narrower job belongs to the Committee on Subordinate Legislation. It checks exactly one thing: whether the Executive stays inside the rule-making power Parliament actually gave it.

Regulator oversight, covering telecom, insurance, and electricity, falls to Ad hoc Committees and DRSCs. It's worth remembering who doesn't hold that job: the Finance Commission, the FSLRC, and NITI Aayog all sound like plausible candidates, but none of them does it.

4 Exam Practice: PYQ Pattern

Common traps in this topic

- Swapping which committee is standing vs ad hoc — Estimates is standing, Railway Convention is ad hoc.
- Claiming all three Financial Committees have Rajya Sabha members. The Estimates Committee has none.
- Reversing the PAC/Estimates chairing convention: PAC is Opposition-led, Estimates is ruling-party-led.

5 Current Affairs

Current Affairs

DRSC reconstitution and JPCs in the news

All 24 DRSCs were reconstituted in September 2024, right after the 18th Lok Sabha election. Leadership shifted in the process: Shashi Tharoor kept the External Affairs committee, while Bhartruhari Mahtab took over Finance.

A JPC on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill submitted its report on 31 January 2025, tabled on 13 February 2025 with 14 amendments. A separate JPC on "One Nation, One Election" was formed in December 2024,

chaired by P.P. Chaudhary, and more JPCs followed through November 2025. Ad hoc JPCs tied to a live Bill keep coming up in current affairs, and exams like to pair each JPC to its Bill and its chairperson. That pairing, more than the raw count, is what's worth tracking.

Quick recall: Which Financial Committee has no Rajya Sabha members at all?

The Estimates Committee — all 30 of its members come from the Lok Sabha.

Quick recall: Why is the PAC chaired by the Opposition, but the Estimates Committee by the ruling party?

The PAC audits past spending, so Opposition leadership keeps that scrutiny meaningful. The Estimates Committee plans future spending, closer to policy work, so the ruling side leads it.

Quick recall: How many DRSCs are there, and when were they last reorganised?

24 DRSCs, reorganised in 2004 from an earlier set of 17. They were last reconstituted in September 2024.

Quick recall: Can a sitting Minister serve on a Parliamentary Committee?

Not on the financial committees or the Departmental Committees, not even the one that oversees the Minister's own ministry. A few others differ, such as the Rajya Sabha General Purposes Committee.

Practice MCQs

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

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

B. Committee on Public Undertakings

C. Public Accounts Committee

D. Estimates Committee

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **D.** 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.

   ↑ Q1

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2
3. **False.** ↑ 3

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