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The Lok Sabha and Parliamentary Procedures

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From Zero Hour to the Anti-Defection Law, the Lok Sabha runs on a set of tools built for one job — holding the government to account.

> **552 members, 5-year term** The term is a ceiling, not a guarantee — the House can dissolve early.
> **Zero Hour is an Indian invention** Not in the rulebook at all — it grew purely out of practice.
> **Removing the Speaker needs a high bar** A majority of all members, not just those present and voting.
> **"Parliamentary" means one thing** The government answers to, and can be removed by, Parliament.

Zero Hour: An informal slot right after Question Hour where members raise urgent matters. It has no rulebook basis.

Cut Motion: A motion moved during discussion on Demands for Grants that seeks to reduce a proposed spending amount.

Tenth Schedule: The part of the Constitution that holds India's Anti-Defection Law.

Article 94(c): The provision that lets the Lok Sabha remove its own Speaker by resolution.

1 Strength and Term

Must Know

- The Lok Sabha's maximum permissible strength is **552 members**, with a normal **five-year term**.
- Five years is a **ceiling, not a guarantee**. The House can be dissolved earlier — which is exactly why "normal term" and "actual term served" are two different numbers in practice.

2 The Speaker's Role, Zero Hour, and the No-Confidence Motion

Must Know

- The **Speaker of the Lok Sabha** presides over the House, maintaining order and interpreting procedure. The Speaker holds a **casting vote only in case of a tie** — not a regular vote alongside every other member.
- **Zero Hour** is an informal Indian innovation — not found in most other parliamentary systems — that lets members raise urgent matters. It has **no fixed constitutional or rule-book basis**; it developed purely through parliamentary practice, which is exactly why it's called "informal."
- A **No-Confidence Motion** against the government isn't explicitly named anywhere in the Constitution's text — it flows from the broader principle of collective responsibility. It needs the support of at least **50 members** just to be introduced in the Lok Sabha.

Think it through. A no-confidence motion against the government and one against the Speaker both use the word “no-confidence.” Are they the same mechanism?

Show the explanation

No — they test very different things. A motion against the government asks if the Council of Ministers still has majority support. It comes from the idea of collective responsibility. A motion against the Speaker instead uses Article 94(c). It asks if the House still wants that person leading it. One is about who governs. The other is about who runs the House. They share a name and a voting method, but not the same target or the same rule.

Quick check 1. Zero Hour has a fixed basis in the Constitution or in Parliament’s rules. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

3 The Three Financial Committees

Good to Know

- The **Estimates Committee**, **Public Accounts Committee**, and **Committee on Public Undertakings** are Parliament's three Financial Committees.
- These committees let Parliament scrutinise government spending in real detail — going well beyond what floor debates alone could ever achieve.

4 The Cut Motion, the Anti-Defection Law, and the CAG-PAC Link

Good to Know

- A **Cut Motion** is moved during discussion on Demands for Grants, and it seeks to reduce the amount of a proposed demand. Along with Zero Hour, it's one of the real tools individual MPs have to question and check the government — going well beyond simply voting on bills.
- India's **Anti-Defection Law** sits in the **Tenth Schedule**, and it disqualifies members who defect from their party. This reflects a deliberate trade-off: it reduces political instability from defections, at some real cost to individual legislators' independent judgment.
- The **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** has been called the "friend, philosopher, and guide" of the Public Accounts Committee. The CAG audits how public money was spent. The PAC then uses those findings to check the government's work. Without the CAG, the PAC would have far less to work with.

Quick check 2. The Public Accounts Committee has been called the “friend, philosopher, and guide” of the CAG. *(True or False?)*

See answer ↓

5 How the Speaker Can Actually Be Removed

Great to Know

- Under **Article 94(c)**, the Speaker can be removed by a resolution passed by a **majority of all the then members** of the Lok Sabha — not just those present and voting, a notably higher bar.
- The resolution needs at least **14 days’ written notice** to the Secretary-General. It must be signed by at least one member and is typically supported by 50 members before it can even be moved.
- The Speaker **cannot preside** over their own removal proceedings, but they may still participate in the debate and vote.

6 What Actually Makes India a “Parliamentary” System

Great to Know

- A **Parliamentary System** is defined by one specific test: the government is responsible to Parliament and can be removed by it. It is not defined by how the government was formed, or which parties are represented in it.
- India has this system specifically because the **Council of Ministers is responsible to the Lok Sabha**. It is not because the Lok Sabha is directly elected, or because Parliament can amend the Constitution, or because the Rajya Sabha can’t be dissolved. Each of those is a true fact about India, but none of them is the actual defining test.

- The core advantage this system offers is **accountability** — the executive stays answerable to the legislature. It is not “smooth policy” or “efficient administration,” which some students wrongly pick as the main advantage.
- Much of the Lok Sabha’s working procedure traces back to one person — G.V. Mavalankar, independent India’s first Lok Sabha Speaker, who set many of these rules and conventions from scratch.

> **Quick check 3.** The main advantage of a parliamentary system is continuity of policy and administrative efficiency. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

7 The First No-Confidence Motion Against a Speaker in Nearly 40 Years

Current Affairs

- On **10 February 2026**, the Opposition gave formal notice of a no-confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker **Om Birla** — signed by 118 opposition MPs across Congress, DMK, Samajwadi Party, RJD, and Left parties — the first such motion in nearly four decades. It used the exact **Article 94(c)** mechanism this article’s “How the Speaker Can Actually Be Removed” section describes.
- The House debated the motion over **11-12 March 2026**. After nearly 13 hours of debate with more than 42 MPs participating, the Lok Sabha **rejected the motion by voice vote**, with Home Minister Amit Shah defending the Speaker.

Quick Q&A

- **Does Zero Hour have a basis in the Constitution?** No. It’s an informal practice that developed on its own, with no fixed rule-book

basis.

- **What's the actual defining test of a parliamentary system?** That the government is responsible to, and can be removed by, Parliament — not how it was formed or which parties sit in it.
- **What threshold does removing the Speaker require?** A resolution passed by a majority of all the then members of the Lok Sabha, with at least 14 days' notice — a higher bar than a simple majority of those present and voting.
- **What role does the CAG play for the Public Accounts Committee?** The CAG's audit findings give the PAC the material it needs to scrutinise government spending — earning it the description "friend, philosopher, and guide" of the PAC.

Practice MCQs

1. As stipulated in the Constitution, what is the maximum permissible strength of the Lok Sabha?

A. 550 members

B. 552 members

C. 530 members

D. 525 members

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.** The Constitution stipulates a maximum Lok Sabha strength of 552 members, comprising up to 530 from States, up to 20 from Union Territories, and formerly 2 nominated Anglo-Indian members. ↑ Q1

Quick-check answers

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

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