

Ministerial Statements and Question Time - teacher instructions

THE SCRIPTED OUTLINE

- The mini-parliament activity is scripted for the following key roles:
 - The Clerk of the Parliament
 - The Sergeant-at-Arms
 - The Speaker
 - The Premier
 - The Leader of the Opposition
 - 7 Ministers, and
 - 5 Government Backbench Members
- Additional students can be accommodated by increasing the number of Backbench members.
- If student numbers are small, reduce the number of government Backbenchers. Alternatively, if the numbers are too small for all the roles to be filled, some students can take on two roles.
- Maintain the majority of the Government.
- The mini-parliament activity identifies Ministers and Members by their portfolios and their electorates (eg the Member for Mansfield). Classroom parliaments can refer to students by their first names (eg the Member for Robert) or their last names (eg the Member for Brown).
- The activity sets a nominal time limit of 90 seconds for both Ministerial Statements and Questions at Question Time. The Clerk keeps the time and advises the Speaker if a Member goes over time. If necessary, the Speaker says – Order, the Honourable Member’s time has expired.
- Print the role and script cards for each Minister and Shadow Minister.
- Other activities which could be incorporated in a classroom parliament include – prayers, petitions, government business (debating of bills) and matters of public importance [see attached Order of Business sheet].

THE QUEENSLAND STATE PARLIAMENT - GENERAL NOTES

- The Speaker is a member of the Government.
- The Premier and all Ministers and Shadow Ministers speak from their place in the Chamber rather than speaking from the Despatch Box on the table in Parliament.
- The Clerk of the Parliament and the Sergeant-at-Arms sit at the Table [see Chamber seating plan].
- The Speaker sits in the Speaker’s Chair, and takes advice from the Clerk of the Parliament.
- The Mace is carried by the Sergeant-at-Arms on the right shoulder. When the Parliament is in session, the Mace is on the Table with the Crown pointing to the Government benches. An umbrella can become an improvised mace.
- The purpose of a Ministerial Statement is to allow a Minister an opportunity to draw attention to a Government initiative in the Minister’s portfolio or area of responsibility. A Ministerial Statement can also explain a Government decision, or comment upon and explain some aspect of Government policy. Only Ministers make Ministerial Statements [see attached sample].
- The purpose of Question Time is to give Members of Parliament the opportunity to question Ministers about the conduct of their portfolios and about Government policy in relation to their portfolios. It is an important way of making the Government accountable to the whole Parliament for its actions. All Members can ask questions without notice [see attached sample question and answer].
- A vote is taken at the end of the debate on a Bill and, if Members from either side disagree, a division is called. Members move to one side or other of the Chamber, depending on their vote – the ‘ayes’ always move to the right of the Speaker’s Chair, the ‘noes’ to the left. In a classroom parliament the division can take the form of a show of hands. The Ministerial Statements/Question Time activity does not involve a division.
- Legislation when introduced into the Legislative Assembly is referred to as a Bill. It becomes an Act of Parliament after receiving Royal Assent from the Governor.

SUMMARY OF ROLES

Speaker

As the Speaker in the Legislative Assembly you have a very important role. You control the proceedings in the Chamber. It is your responsibility to ensure that the session of Parliament runs smoothly.

If a Member who is speaking goes over the 90 second time limit, the Clerk will inform you and you can let the Member know.

If a Member behaves in an unparliamentary way, you may have the Member removed by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Government - Premier

As the Premier, you are the head of the State Government. You have a lot of responsibility in relation to formulating policies and the direction of the Government. You sit on the front bench on the Government side of the Chamber.

Government - Minister

As a Minister in the Government, you have a very important job. You are in charge of a Government Department and therefore you have a lot of responsibility, especially in relation to working out the policies of your Department. Of course, you don't do this alone. You receive advice from the senior Public Servants in your Department. You sit on the front bench on the Government side of the Chamber.

Government - Backbench Member

You are a Member of Parliament belonging to the party which is in Government. Your main function is to represent the people in your electorate, and you may also be a member of various Parliamentary Committees.

Opposition - Leader of the Opposition

As the Leader of the Opposition, you have an important responsibility not only for working out the policies of the Opposition, but also for keeping a close watch on the Premier. It is your role to help keep the Government accountable for its actions. You sit on the front bench on the Opposition side of the Chamber.

Opposition - Shadow Minister

As a Shadow Minister in the Opposition, you have an important responsibility, not only in working out the policies in relation to your portfolio, but also in keeping a close watch on the Minister in order to help keep the Government accountable for its actions. You sit on the front bench on the Opposition side of the Chamber.

Opposition - Backbench Member

You are a Member of Parliament belonging to the party which forms the Opposition. However, you are not a Shadow Minister. Your main function is to represent the people in your electorate and you may be a member of various Parliamentary Committees.

Parliamentary Office Holder - The Clerk of the Parliament

As the Clerk of the Parliament in the Legislative Assembly you advise the Speaker and all Members on the rules of the Chamber. You record the minutes of the proceedings of the Parliament. You keep track of the 90 second time limit and advise the Speaker if a Member goes over the time limit. You ring the bell to signal to the Speaker and the Sergeant-at-Arms to enter the Chamber, and you read the Standing Orders aloud to the Parliament. You sit on the right hand side of the table in front of the Speaker.

Parliamentary Office Holder - Sergeant-at-Arms

As Sergeant-at-Arms in the Legislative Assembly your formal role is to help the Speaker keep order in the Chamber. You announce the Speaker on entry to the Chamber at the beginning of the day's sitting. You carry the Mace on your right shoulder and place it at the end of the table in the Chamber, with the Crown facing the Government side.