ROLE PLAYING A PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

→ A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Our House is your house
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TIME REQUIRED: 2-3 HOURS

Note: The role play could be part of a longer, integrated unit that includes Achievement Objectives at levels 3, 4, and 5 of the English and Arts curriculum areas. Some suggestions for extending and enhancing the role play can be found on page 8.
Introduction

Role play can be a powerful tool for learning. By identifying with other people’s roles, students are able to explore issues and experiences from other perspectives, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the issues or experiences.

This booklet is part of the Explore Parliament suite of resources, which also includes a set of student cards and a teachers’ guide. It will help you to plan a role play of a parliamentary debate that will enhance your students’ understanding of the parliamentary process and the workings of our democracy. Depending on the time available and the requirements of your teaching programme, you can use it as a stand-alone resource or in conjunction with the other components.

Curriculum links

Social sciences
- Understand how groups make and implement rules and laws. [L3]
- Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources. [L3]
- Understand how the ways in which leadership of groups is acquired and exercised have consequences for communities and societies. [L4]
- Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that have an impact on communities. [L4]
- Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people’s lives. [L5]
- Understand how the ideas and actions of people in the past have had significant impacts on people’s lives. [L5]

Key ideas
- Debating issues and laws is a vital part of democracy.
- When introducing or amending laws, there are set processes that must be followed. These processes allow opportunities for scrutiny and debate.
- When debating issues or laws, multiple viewpoints can be presented.

Prior learning

Before your students take part in the role play, they will need to have some understanding of how Parliament works and the procedures that Parliament follows.

Prior to the debate, provide students with some background about the work of Parliament. You can do this in a number of ways:
- Use the resource Explore Parliament, available through Education Services, Parliamentary Service. Email: education.services@parliament.govt.nz
- Work through the appropriate cards and the corresponding sections of the Explore Parliament Teachers’ Guide, in particular, those with information about the various roles in Parliament and its processes, how laws are made, and select committees. Cards 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 of this resource cover these topics
- Watch other debates (for parliamentary debates, go to www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/SeeHear/PTV or www.inthehouse.co.nz)
- Practise debating skills and persuasive writing.

Preparing for the debate

Adapt the following activities to suit your students and your teaching programme. To keep the role play within the 2–3 hour timeframe, it is assumed that the bill is already in its final reading (although, in reality, each parliamentary bill has three separate debates).

However, the role play could be part of a longer, integrated unit that includes Achievement Objectives at levels 3, 4, or 5 of the English and Arts curriculum areas. Suggestions for extending and enhancing the role play can be found on page 8.

Choose an issue to debate

There are a number of ways to choose an issue to debate. Select the method that best suits your students and the time available.
- Debate one of the following issues:
  - “Raising the school leaving age”.
  - “Banning the use in public of electronic listening devices such as iPods”.
  - “Compulsory microchipping of all domestic pets”.
- Have a class brainstorm to identify issues that interest your students and then pick one of these. It could be a local or national issue.
- Read the newspapers or listen to the news and choose an issue currently being discussed in the media. Students could collect articles and research the topic.
- Visit the Parliament website and find a bill currently being debated.
- Use the issue raised in the model bill in Appendix B.

Discuss the issue and reasons for introducing a bill

Discuss the issue and the various arguments around it.
- Talk about the reasons for introducing a bill to Parliament to address the issue.
- What is the bill’s purpose and what outcomes are intended? Ask the students to think about what the consequences should be for not complying with the bill if it became law.
- Decide which Minister would be responsible for introducing the bill. (What area of Government, such as Education or Health, would be responsible?)
- Working as a class or in groups, ask the students to come up with some arguments for and against the introduction of this bill and to record these on a sheet of paper or whiteboard divided into “For” and “Against” columns.
Draft the bill

Use the template supplied in Appendix A to draft your bill. All bills must include:

- **Title** – the name of your bill
- **Purpose** – the intended outcome of the bill
- **Compliance** – what will happen if the terms of the bill are not met.

Students can discuss these points when composing the bill or when discussing the issue.

If time is limited, you can use the model bill supplied in Appendix B.

Assign roles for the debate

For the debate to mirror a parliamentary debate, students will need to take on particular roles. Some students will assume the roles of members of Parliament while others will be officers of the House. One or two students can act as the press gallery and provide a record of the debate, using photography, written notes, or video.

The following roles should be assigned first:

- **The Speaker** controls the debate and is vital to the smooth running of the proceedings. The teacher can take this role if necessary.
- **The Clerk of the House** is an official of the House. The Clerk assists the Speaker in running the debate by reading the rules, announcing the bills, and recording and tallying the votes.
- **The Serjeant-at-Arms** is also an official of the House. The Serjeant introduces the Speaker and, while carrying the Mace, escorts him or her in and out of the House. During proceedings, the Serjeant-at-Arms sits by the door. (In Parliament, the Serjeant-at-Arms is responsible to the Speaker for maintaining proper standards of behaviour in the House.)
- **Reporters** are part of the press gallery. Their job is to record and report on the proceedings. They could do this by photographing, taking notes, and/or videoing what occurs. Reporters can move around the House but must not interfere with the running of the debate.

Note: Students in the first three roles will have lines to read from the script (pages 10 and 11).

Reporters could be students who are less confident speakers.

The following roles need to be assigned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Government</th>
<th>The Opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister – leader of the main party in Government</td>
<td>Leader of the Opposition – leader of the main party in Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the portfolio relating to the issue for debate (for example, Minister of Education, Minister for the Environment, or Minister of Health)</td>
<td>Spokesperson for the portfolio relating to the issue for debate (for example, Spokesperson on Education, Spokesperson on the Environment, or Spokesperson on Health)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government whip</td>
<td>Opposition whip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Allow time to negotiate

Give each party time to decide where it stands on the bill. The main party in the Government must support the bill because its Minister put it forward. The other parties can decide whether or not to support the bill. The Government whip will need to check with all the smaller parties to make sure that the Government has enough support for its bill. If it doesn’t, the whip may need to convince one or more of the smaller parties to support the bill. He or she can do this by asking the smaller parties what adjustments to the bill might help them to decide to support it. The focus of negotiations should be on finding common ground and agreement.

Research, write, and practise speeches

Decide on an appropriate time limit for the speeches (for example, five minutes maximum).

Give the students time to do further research on the issue and to write and practise their speeches. Appendix C provides a template to help students organise their arguments and prepare their speeches. Students who do not have speaking roles can support those who do by providing ideas, viewpoints, and information.

Establish the speaking order

The whips are responsible for organising the speaking order for their sides of the debate. The order should be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Cabinet Minister with the portfolio relating to the issue</td>
<td>The Opposition Spokesperson responsible for the portfolio relating to the issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Leader of the Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The leaders and/or spokespersons from each of the minor parties</td>
<td>The leaders and/or spokespersons from each of the minor parties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The whips collect the names of those speaking, record them, and supply this speaking order to the Speaker before the debate begins. While the parties are preparing, the Clerk and Serjeant-at-Arms should also practise their scripts and actions.
The debate

Setting up the classroom

Arrange your classroom as shown below. The Government sits to the right of the Speaker and the Opposition sits to his or her left.

Background information

Before starting the role play:

• Remind the students about the importance of parliamentary procedure and the significance of the ceremonial side of Parliament.
• Explain that in the role play, they will try to follow the parliamentary procedures they have seen or read about.
• Outline what will happen at the beginning when the Speaker enters the House.
• Go over the various roles, their functions, and how participants are expected to conduct themselves.
• Discuss the rules that will apply for the debate. [For the list of rules, see the role play script on pages 10 and 11.]

Beginning the role play

Have the Government and Opposition parties take their seats on the right- and left-hand sides of the Speaker respectively. The Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition take the fourth seat down from the Speaker in the front row on either side, the Deputy sits beside the Leader on the side nearest the Speaker, the Cabinet Minister and Opposition Spokesperson sit next to the Deputy, and the whip sits behind the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition.

Remind press reporters and photographers that they may stand and move around but they may not interfere with the work of the House.

The role play script provides the Speaker, Clerk of the House, and Serjeant-at-Arms with the words and actions they will need for the Speaker’s procession and the debate.

The Speaker’s procession

• The Speaker is led into the House by the Serjeant-at-Arms, who announces, “Mr Speaker” or “Madam Speaker”.
• All the MPs stand as they enter.
• The Speaker says the prayer and takes the chair.
• The Serjeant-at-Arms places the Mace on the Table of the House and takes his or her seat at the back of the room. (The head of the Mace should be pointing towards the Government side.)

The debate

• The Speaker calls on the Clerk to read the rules of the House.
• The Clerk reads out the rules.
• The Speaker then calls on the Clerk to read the title of the bill.
• The Clerk reads out the title of the bill to be debated.
• The Speaker uses the speaking order provided by the whips and calls, by name, on the first person from the Government to speak. This is always the Minister who is responsible for the bill. The next speaker is always the Opposition Spokesperson.
• The debate follows the order of speakers as provided by the whips. Opposition speakers alternate with Government speakers.
• At the end of the debate, the Speaker calls for a vote. The Speaker asks all those in favour of the bill to say “Aye” and all those against the bill to say “No”. The Speaker then calls for a party vote.
• The Clerk conducts a more formal party vote using the template provided in Appendix D and hands the result to the Speaker.
• The Speaker reads out the result of the vote.
• Following this, the Clerk reads the name of the bill once more and the Speaker adjourns the House.
• The Serjeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker out of the House after removing the Mace.
→ Evaluation

Give each student a self-assessment sheet to complete [Appendix E].

Then, as a class, discuss the role play and what the students have learnt from taking part.
For example:
- How did the various speakers support or question the bill?
- Why was it important to have rules ("Standing Orders") for the debate?
- Why is the Speaker’s role especially important?
- What are the advantages of debating a bill before it becomes law?
- What have you learnt about the work of members of Parliament and parties?
- What have you learnt about how a parliamentary democracy works?
- What skills do you think an MP might need to use in debate?

→ Activities to extend and enhance the role play

Costumes and props

The use of costumes and props can enhance student engagement by creating an atmosphere of formality. If desired, all participants could wear clothing that reflects the dress code required in Parliament’s Standing Orders (rules), that is, men must wear suits and ties and women must wear corporate dress.

A collection of second-hand shirts, jackets, and ties and other business-type clothing can be used or students could bring suitable dress from home.

The Speaker could wear something to reflect the importance of his or her position. A cloak or university gown would be suitable. Students acting as MPs can also wear party badges. A simple Mace can be made using a metre rule with a cardboard cut-out attached to the top. (For instructions on how to make a Mace, see the inside back cover.) The Serjeant-at-Arms can also wear white gloves to carry the Mace.

Creating political parties

Each party could decide on a name. It could also choose a distinguishing colour, design a party logo, invent a party slogan, and create badges, rosettes, posters, banners, and pamphlets to promote the party and its ideas.

Having more than one debate on a bill

Students could have more than one debate on a bill. After the first debate, the bill could be sent to a select committee (a small group of MPs from different parties who could suggest changes to make the bill more acceptable to more parties). A second debate could then take place in which MPs suggest changes to the bill. After the second debate, the House could vote on whether to accept any suggested changes. Then a third debate (final debate) could take place. Parties can change their minds on whether or not to support the bill based on the changes to it.

Research and writing

Those students who will be reporters could also research the issue, interview the politicians, and write and/or present stories for their papers, websites, or radio or television stations.

Prior to the debate, students who take the roles of Serjeant-at-Arms, Clerk, and the Speaker could help the political parties with research and writing speeches.

Videoing

During the debate, reporters could video proceedings. The videos could be used as part of the evaluation process at the conclusion of the debate.

→ Additional activities for years 9 and 10 students

If your students have had some experience in debating, you could structure the role play so that it is more like a genuine debate. In addition to reading their prepared speeches, students could argue and rebut points made by the opposing side. When researching and writing their own speeches, they should also consider arguments the other side might make and prepare possible responses.

Students could also:
- Interview participants in role about the issue being debated
- View the video (if used to record the debate) and critique their debating skills
- Prepare a submission on the issue (or on another issue) to present to a select committee
- Find out how local government meetings are run (for example, when considering a new by-law) and compare this with the way Parliament operates
- Research the history of a parliamentary role or ceremony and present their findings.

→ Useful resources


The Arts Online: http://artsonline.tki.org.nz/Drama

Parliamentary role play script

The Serjeant-at-Arms escorts the Speaker into the House (classroom), walking in front of the Speaker and carrying the Mace on his or her right shoulder. All stand as they enter.

Serjeant-at-Arms: Mr Speaker (or) Madam Speaker

The Speaker stands in front of the Speaker’s Chair. The Serjeant-at-Arms stands beside the Speaker while he or she reads the prayer.

The Speaker: Almighty God, humbly acknowledging our need for thy guidance in all things, and laying aside all private and personal interests, we beseech thee to grant that we may conduct the affairs of this _________________________ (name of class and/or school) House and of our country to the glory of thy holy name, the maintenance of true religion and justice, the honour of the Queen, and the public welfare, schools, peace and tranquillity of New Zealand, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

The Serjeant-at-Arms places the Mace in the cradle on the Table of the House and then takes his or her seat at the back of the room. All sit.

The Speaker: The rules of this _________________________ (name of class and/or school) House of Representatives must be obeyed. Clerk please read out the rules.

The Clerk (Stands up before speaking):

1. Always stand up to speak.
2. Always address your remarks through the Speaker. Begin with the words “Madam Speaker” or “Mr Speaker”.
3. Members speak without interruption.
4. The Speaker keeps order.

The Clerk sits down.

The Speaker: Call on Government Order of the day Number 1.

The Clerk (Stands up before speaking) _________________________ (Name of bill) _________________________ Bill, third reading.

The Clerk sits down.

The Speaker: I call on ___________ (The name of the first speaker for the Government)

The debate

The debate proceeds. The Government speakers alternate with Opposition speakers.

All speakers must direct their words through the Speaker by beginning their speech “Mr/Madam Speaker”.

When all speakers have spoken, the debate concludes as follows.

The Speaker: The question is that the motion be agreed to. Those in favour say aye ...

Contrary, no ...

All members answer “Aye” or “No”.

The Speaker: Party vote called for. Clerk please conduct a party vote.

The Speaker: Honourable members, the ayes are ___ ; the noes are ___. The motion is agreed (defeated).

The Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

All stand. The Serjeant-at-Arms picks up the Mace and escorts the Speaker out of the House, walking in front of the Speaker and carrying the Mace on his or her right shoulder.
Appendices

Appendix A: Template for a New Bill

Minister of ___________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Bill

Contents
1. Title
2. Commencement
3. Purpose
4. Compliance

The Parliament of New Zealand enacts as follows:

1. Title
   This Bill is the ____________________________________________ 201_.

2. Commencement
   The Bill comes into force on the day after the date it receives the Royal assent.

3. Purpose
   This Bill has the following purposes:
   (Why is this bill being introduced and what is it intended to achieve?)

4. Compliance
   (What will be the consequences for those who fail to comply with the new law?)

Appendix B: Model Bill

Minister for the Environment
Reduction of Plastic Packaging Bill

Contents
1. Title
2. Commencement
3. Purpose
4. Compliance

The Parliament of New Zealand enacts as follows:

1. Title
   This Bill is the Reduction of Plastic Packaging Bill 2012.

2. Commencement
   The Bill comes into force on the day after the date it receives the Royal assent.

3. Purpose
   This Bill has the following purposes:
   a. To promote the use of more environmentally friendly packaging
   b. To require businesses to reduce the usage of plastic packaging.
   (The Ministry for the Environment will instruct all retail outlets to reduce the use of plastic packaging by a minimum of 75 percent, or replace the use of plastic with biodegradable packaging.)

4. Compliance
   All retail outlets must comply no later than six months after this Act comes into force. Failure to comply is an offence. Any retail outlet still using products made from plastic outside the agreed limitations, and after the six-month grace period once this Act comes into force, will be fined up to ten thousand dollars. After three prosecutions, the business will be closed down,
Appendix C: Speech Preparation Template

For/Against

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason 1</th>
<th>Reason 2</th>
<th>Reason 3</th>
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Mr/Madam Speaker: I support/do not support the _______________ Bill because

Appendix D: Clerk of the House Voting Tally

<table>
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<th>Party</th>
<th>Number Voting Aye</th>
<th>Number Voting No</th>
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Appendix E: Self-assessment Sheet

Name                                      Role

What I did well in my role:

What I found difficult about my role:

Things that went well in our role play:

How we could have improved our role play:

What I learnt about Parliament by taking part in the role play:

Questions I still have about Parliament and the way it works:

Appendix F: Make a Mace

You will need:
- A sheet of thick cardboard at least 60 cm x 45 cm, or two pieces of A3-size cardboard (or you could make a "mini-Mace" – using an A4-size card)
- A piece of thick dowel, curtain rod, or a ruler about 70-80 cm long (or half that size if you're making a mini-Mace)
- A craft knife
- Glue and gold paint.

To make the Mace
1. Use a photocopier to enlarge the template diagram from A4 to A3. (If making the mini-Mace, leave it as is.) Cut out the shapes.
2. Trace the head and tail of the Mace twice onto the cardboard and cut them out using the craft knife. (Note: Make the slots in the head and tail the same width as the thickness of the cardboard. One slot will need to be cut from the top of the head as indicated by the dotted line.)
3. Slot both parts of the head and tail together.
4. Cut the dowel or rod to length to use as the stem of the Mace.
5. Cut cross-shaped slots 25 cm long into each end of the stem. (The width of each slot should be the same thickness as the card.)
6. To assemble the Mace, slide the head and tail into the slots on the stem.
7. Glue them in place and paint the Mace gold.