



Australian Parliament House

Canberra

- The current Parliament House opened in 1988.
- Parliament House has a grass-covered roof that people can walk on.
- The building has a large flagpole that is 81 metres tall.
- Parliament House sits on Capital Hill in Canberra.
- Both the House of Representatives and the Senate meet in the same building.



Westminster Palace

London

- The Palace of Westminster was rebuilt after a fire and opened in 1870.
- The Palace of Westminster looks like a large historic castle with towers and stone walls.
- The building has the famous Elizabeth Tower, which is the tall clock tower that houses the bell Big Ben.
- The Palace of Westminster sits beside the River Thames in London.
- Both the House of Commons and the House of Lords meet in the same building.



The House of Representatives

Australia

- One of the two houses of the Australian Parliament.
- Also known as the lower house.
- Has 150 members, elected by the people of Australia in federal elections.
- The Australian Government is formed here.
- The seats are arranged in rows to form a U-shape.
- The Speaker sits at the open end of the U-shape and runs the meetings.
- Government members sit on the Speaker's right; Opposition members sit on the left.
- The Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition sit at the central table.
- Minor parties and independents sit in the curved part of the U-shape.
- There are four viewing galleries: one for the press behind the Speaker's chair, and others for the public.



The House of Commons

United Kingdom

- One of the two houses of the UK Parliament.
- Also known as the lower house.
- Has 650 members, elected by the people in UK elections.
- The UK Government is formed here.
- The seats are arranged in rows facing each other.
- The Speaker sits at one end and runs the meetings.
- Government members sit on the Speaker's right; Opposition members sit on the left.
- The Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition sit at the central table.
- Minor parties and independents sit on benches behind the main parties.
- Has viewing galleries for the public and a Press Gallery behind the Speaker.



The Senate

Australia

- One of two houses of the Australian Parliament.
- Also known as the upper house.
- Has 76 senators, elected by the people of Australia in federal elections.
- Represents the states and territories of Australia.
- The seats are arranged in rows to form a U-shape.
- The President of the Senate sits at the open end of the U-shape and runs the meetings.
- Government senators sit on the President's right; Opposition senators sit on the left.
- The Leader of the Government in the Senate and Leader of the Opposition in the Senate sit at the central table.
- Minor parties and independents sit in the seats in the curved part of the U-shape.
- There are four viewing galleries: one for the press behind the President's chair, and others for the public.



The House of Lords

United Kingdom

- One of the two houses of the UK Parliament.
- Also known as the upper house.
- Has approximately 800 members, known as lords. They are appointed by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister, not elected.
- There is no set size for the group, so the number of members can change. Most members are appointed for life. There are also bishops (senior leaders of the church) and a small number of members who inherit their position from their family.
- The seats are arranged in rows facing each other.
- The Lord Speaker sits on the Woolsack at one end of the chamber and helps run meetings.
- Most Lords sit on the government or opposition side, but the House of Lords has more flexible seating, with many members (like Crossbenchers) sitting independently.
- Has galleries above the chamber for visitors and the press. The press gallery is located above the Lord Speaker's position, and other galleries are open to the public so anyone can watch debates.



Prime Minister

Australia

- The leader of the Australian Government.
- By tradition, the Prime Minister is a member of the House of Representatives.
- When in the House of Representatives, the Prime Minister sits at the central table in front of the government and directly opposite the Leader of the Opposition.
- As the head of the Australian Government, they take the lead in making major speeches to Parliament about government policy and answer the most questions directed to the government during Question Time.
- The people of Australia do not vote for the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is chosen by a vote of the members of the party in government. If the party in government decides to change their leader, the Prime Minister will change.
- Australia has no maximum period of service for a Prime Minister.



Prime Minister

United Kingdom

- The leader of the UK Government.
- By tradition, the Prime Minister is a member of the House of Commons.
- When in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister sits on the front bench on the government side, directly opposite to the Leader of the Opposition.
- As the head of the UK Government, they take the lead in making major speeches to Parliament about government policy and answer the most questions directed to the government during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs).
- The people of the UK do not vote for the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is chosen as the leader of the political party that can command a majority in the House of Commons. If the party in government decides to change their leader, the Prime Minister will change.
- The UK has no maximum period of service for a Prime Minister.



Despatch Boxes

Australia

- These are two wooden chests that sit on the central table in the House of Representatives. One is next to the Prime Minister's chair, and the other is next to the Leader of the Opposition's chair.
- They are made of rosewood and decorated with silver and enamel. They are hinged and lockable.
- The Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, ministers, and shadow ministers use the Despatch Boxes to rest their speech notes and other documents while speaking in the House.
- The Despatch Boxes contains forms and religious books used for swearing-in new members of the House.
- These boxes are replicas of the boxes which sat in the House of Commons before they were destroyed by a bomb explosion in the Second World War.
- They were a gift to the Australian Parliament from King George V to mark the opening of Provisional Parliament House (now called Old Parliament House) in 1927.



Despatch Boxes

United Kingdom

- These are two wooden chests that sit on the central table in the House of Commons. One is on the government side, and the other is on the opposition side.
- They are made of mahogany and decorated with brass fittings. They are hinged and lockable.
- The Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, ministers, and shadow ministers use the Despatch Boxes to rest their speech notes and other documents while speaking in the House.
- The Despatch Boxes contains religious books used for swearing-in new members of the House.
- The original Despatch Boxes in the House of Commons were destroyed during the Second World War when the chamber was bombed in 1941.
- In 1952, the current Despatch Boxes were presented to the UK Parliament as a gift from the Commonwealth of Australia. This was a gesture of friendship and solidarity after the war. They were modelled on the Australian Despatch Boxes, which themselves were gifts from King George V to the Australian Parliament in 1927.



Serjeant-at-Arms with Mace

Australia

- The Serjeant-at-Arms is a senior parliamentary officer who helps the House of Representatives run smoothly.
- They lead the Speaker of the House of Representatives into and out of the chamber while carrying the Mace.
- They help the Speaker to maintain order in both the chamber and public galleries.
- They record the attendance of members.
- They stand guard during a division (a formal vote) when the doors to the House are locked.
- They deliver formal messages from the House of Representatives to the Senate.
- They take part in ceremonies, such as the opening of Parliament.
- The Mace is the symbol of the power of the House and the Speaker.
- When the House is sitting, the Mace is placed on the central table. The crown of the Mace always points to the government, and the Australian Coat of Arms faces up. The Mace stays on the table while the House is meeting. When the House is not meeting, the Mace is stored in the Speaker's Office.
- The Mace was a gift to the Australian Parliament by the British House of Commons and King George VI in 1951. It celebrated the jubilee year - 50th anniversary - of federation. It was made in London to look like the Mace used in the British House of Commons.



Serjeant-at-Arms with Mace

United Kingdom

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- They help the Speaker to maintain order in both the chamber and public galleries.
- They record the attendance of members.
- They stand guard during a division (a formal vote) when the doors to the House are locked.
- They deliver formal messages from the House of Commons to the House of Lords.
- They take part in ceremonies, such as the State Opening of Parliament.
- The Mace is the symbol of the authority of the Crown and the House of Commons, and of the Speaker's power to preside.
- When the House is meeting, the Mace is placed on the main table in the chamber, and it doesn't matter which way it points. When the House is not meeting or is working in a smaller committee, the Mace is placed under the table.
- The current Mace was made in 1660 (after the end of the English Civil War) at the request of King Charles II to reflect royal authority in the chamber.



Usher of the Black Rod

Australia

- The Usher of the Black Rod is a senior parliamentary officer who helps the Senate to run smoothly.
- They escort the President of the Senate into and out of the Senate while carrying the Black Rod and announce their arrival.
- They assist the President to keep order in the chamber.
- They stand guard during a division (a formal vote) when all doors to the Senate are locked.
- They deliver formal messages from the Senate to the House of Representatives.
- They take part in ceremonies, including the opening of Parliament.
- The Black Rod is a ceremonial staff that represents their authority.
- It is 1.44m long, made of ebony wood, and weighs 1.119kg. It is topped with a silver crown and has a silver Australian Coat of Arms.
- When the Senate is meeting and the Black Rod is not needed, it stands upright beside the Usher's chair.
- The Black Rod used today was made in 1988, for the opening of the current Parliament House.



Usher of the Black Rod

United Kingdom

- The Lady/Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod is a senior parliamentary officer who helps the House of Lords to run smoothly.
- They escort the Lord Speaker into and out of the chamber while carrying the Black Rod and announce their arrival.
- They assist the Lord Speaker to maintain order in the chamber.
- They stand guard during a division (a formal vote) when all the doors in the House of Lords are locked.
- They deliver formal messages from the House of Lords to the House of Commons.
- They take part in ceremonies, such as the State Opening of Parliament.
- The Black Rod is a ceremonial staff that symbolises the authority of the House of Lords.
- It is 1.2m long, made of ebony wood, and is topped with a gold lion and decorated with a gold crown.
- When not in use, the Black Rod is kept in the House of Lords chamber near the Usher's seat. The tradition of the Black Rod dates back to 1361, and the current rod was made in 1883.



Presiding Officers

Australia

The presiding officer in both chambers is the person who leads the meetings, and makes sure everyone follows the rules and gets a fair chance to speak.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- The presiding officer in the House of Representatives is called the Speaker.
- The Speaker is a member of the House chosen by other members (usually nominated by the government) at the start of a new parliament.
- The Speaker is an experienced member of parliament and is expected to treat all members of the House equally.
- The Speaker's chair is at the front of the chamber and can see and hear everything that happens. The Speaker's microphone is always on so they can keep order.

SENATE

- The presiding officer in the Senate is called the President of the Senate.
- The President is a senator who has been elected by fellow senators at the start of a new parliament.
- The President is an experienced senator and is expected to treat all members of the Senate equally.
- The President's chair is at the front of the chamber and can see and hear everything that happens. The President's microphone is always on so they can be heard and maintain order in the Senate.



Presiding Officers

United Kingdom

The presiding officer in both chambers is the person who leads the meetings.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

- The presiding officer is called the Speaker.
- The Speaker is a member of the House who is elected by fellow MPs at the start of a new Parliament.
- They are expected to be fair and treat all members equally. They even have to leave their political party.
- The Speaker has the power to call members to order and to decide who speaks next.
- The Speaker chair is at the front of the House of Commons and can see and hear everything that happens. Their microphone is always on so they can keep order.

HOUSE OF LORDS

- The presiding officer in the House of Lords is called the Lord Speaker.
- The Lord Speaker is a member of the House of Lords who has been elected by other Lords as needed.
- They are expected to be fair and treat all Lords equally. They even have to leave their political party.
- The Lord Speaker has no power to call members to order and to decide who speaks next.
- The Lord Speaker's seat is on the Woolsack, a large cushioned seat in the centre of the chamber and can see and hear everything that happens.

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Card 3 – House of Representatives (Australia)

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Card 4 – House of Commons (UK)

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Card 5 – The Senate (Australia)

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Card 6 – House of Lords (UK)

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Card 7 – Despatch Box (Australia)

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Card 8 – Despatch Box (UK)

UK Parliament

Card 9 – Prime Minister (Australia)

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Card 10 – Prime Minister (UK)

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Card 11 – Serjeant-at-Arms with Mace (Australia)

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Card 12 – Serjeant-at-Arms with Mace (UK)

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Card 13 – Usher of the Black Rod (Australia)

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Card 14 – Usher of the Black Rod (UK)

Image 1: UK Parliament

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Card 15 – Presiding Officers (Australia)

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Card 16 – Presiding Officers (UK)

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Observe and compare: Australia and Westminster

Complete the table below using the *Australian and Westminster* features information cards.

Feature Name	Instructions	AUSTRALIA	WESTMINSTER
	Sketch <i>Use the photo to draw a basic outline of the feature.</i>		
	Similarities <i>What is the same?</i>		
	Differences <i>What is different?</i>		
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