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| **Act** | a law made by Parliament |
| **Address-in-Reply** | the formal response made by the House to the Speech from the Throne, involving the first major debate of the session. Its form is an expression of loyalty to the sovereign, but its substance is a wide-ranging debate on government policy, which can become a matter of [confidence](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/history-of-parliament/useful-terms#confidence). |
| **Bill** | proposed legislation presented to the House in draft form, which then proceeds through a first, second and third reading and is considered by select committee. Substantial amendment may occur before a bill is passed into law or it may be defeated or withdrawn. |
| **Black Rod, (Gentleman) Usher of** | a position of authority originally associated with the Legislative Council and similar to the Serjeant-at-Arms. Black Rod carries an ornamental rod as a symbol of office. Since the abolition of the council in 1951, Black Rod has acted solely as a messenger for the Governor-General in communicating with the House of Representatives during the ceremony of the opening of Parliament. |
| **Chamber** | the large space in which meetings or sittings of the House of Representatives and Legislative Council (until 1951) take place |
| **Clerk of the House of Representatives** | the principal, permanent officer of the House and the head of the Office of the Clerk (previously the Legislative Department). The clerk provides constitutional support for Parliament, advises on parliamentary law and procedure, assists the Speaker and MPs, and keeps the records of Parliament. |
| **Closure** | a procedural device to hasten business by ending debate that does not have a fixed amount of time allotted to it in the House |
| **Committee (of the Whole House)** | describes when the House goes 'into committee', originally to consider matters in private but most commonly to consider bills clause by clause. When in committee, debating rules are relaxed, and, in the past, full Hansard notes were nottaken. The mace is removed from the Table of the House and placed underneath it when the House goes into committee. |
| **Confidence, vote of** | test of the continued willingness of the House to support the government |
| **Debate** | term for the discussion of bills and motions before the House. Rules governing debate are set down in the standing orders |
| **Dissolution** | bringing a Parliament to an end and precipitating a general election through a proclamation of the Governor-General |
| **Division** | process of voting on a motion before the House. Many motions are decided 'on the voices' when MPs simply say 'Aye' or 'No', but when an MP asks for a formal vote, a division takes place. Assembled MPs go into the Ayes and Noes lobbies to record their votes |
| **Executive Council** | the body, presided over by the Governor-General, that tenders formal advice to the Governor-General. It has the same membership as Cabinet, but other ministers without portfolios may also be included. |
| **Factional politics** | the way in which politics was organised before political parties were formed. Groups of supporters or factions would form around leaders who would attempt to create and sustain a government from a majority mustered in the House of Representatives during a session of Parliament. At that time majorities were fragile and governments often fell during the session. |
| **Financial Statement/Budget** | the annual presentation by the minister of finance of the government's financial policy. It describes how the required money is to be raised, gives proposals for spending the money and outlines how the expenditure puts the government's policies into effect. |
| **General Assembly** | the term used from 1854 to 1986 that described Parliament as a whole. It comprised the governor or Governor-General, the House of Representatives and (until 1951) the Legislative Council. In 1986 the term 'General Assembly' was replaced by the more straightforward 'Parliament'. |
| **Hansard** | the written record of what has been said in the House. In the past, this was recorded in shorthand, but it is now digitally recorded. MPs can 'correct their Hansard' before the speeches are printed and bound into volumes under the title *New Zealand parliamentary debates* |
| **Honorarium** | payment of a daily attendance allowance to MPs, which was made prior to the institution of salaries |
| **House of Representatives** | the elected component of Parliament |
| **Legislative Council** | the appointed Upper House of Parliament, which was abolished on 1 January 1951 |
| **Lobbies** | the areas around the chamber, principally the Ayes lobby on the government side to the right of the Speaker and the Noes lobby on the Opposition side to the left of the Speaker. Until 1996, all votes were recorded by formal division in the lobbies. |
| **Local bills** | bills dealing with a particular locality and for local purposes. These became important after the abolition of the provinces in 1876 and were often sought by local authorities to enable their activities. |
| **Mace** | the large gilt staff surmounted by a crown that is based on the club-like weapons carried by royal Serjeants-at-Arms many centuries ago. It is symbolic of the Speaker's authority in the House of Representatives. The mace is carried by the Serjeant-at-Arms and placed on the Table of the House when the House is sitting. |
| **Motion** | a formal proposal that is put forward, debated and then accepted or declined by the House |
| **Naming** | punishment in which the Speaker names MPs and asks the House to pass judgement on their grossly disorderly conduct. The significance of this form of punishment by dishonour derives from the traditional practice of not referring to MPs by name in the chamber. Although the punishment of naming still exists, the old practice of not referring to MPs by their names during debates or other matters in the House was abandoned in 1996. |
| **New Zealand Constitution Act** | the legal foundation of New Zealand's democracy and parliamentary system. Passed by the British Parliament in 1852, it established a General Assembly (and six Provincial Councils), prescribed how Parliament should function and provided for the election of members of the House of Representatives. |
| **Order Paper** | the list of business for each sitting day of the House |
| **Parliament** | the Governor-General (representing the sovereign) and the House of Representatives, together with (until 1951) the Legislative Council, forming the New Zealand legislature. It is also a shorthand reference to a particular Parliament as elected for its term (for example, the 47th Parliament). |
| **Premier** | the earlier term for prime minister. This term was used until about 1906 |
| **Privileges** | the exercise of powers (such as the power to punish for contempt of Parliament) and claim to immunities (such as freedom of speech in the House and committees) by the House of Representatives under a legal status not shared by the population at large. Such powers and immunities are regarded as necessary for the House to function effectively |
| **Readings** of bills | first, second and third readings – stages of consideration of bills as they pass through the House. The first reading takes place after the bill is introduced into the House and involves the minister responsible briefly explaining its contents. The second reading seeks the House's adoption of the bill in principle, and it involves wide debate. This is followed by the bill's detailed examination, clause by clause, by a Committee of the Whole House ('in Committee'). The third reading, concerning the general principles of the bill in its final form, confirms its final passage through the House. |
| **Responsible government** | governments formed with the support of the majority in the House of Representatives. The first two years of Parliament in New Zealand were dominated by this issue as the governor delayed yielding power to Parliament. |
| **Select committees** | small groups of MPs appointed by the House to consider and report on matters referred to them by the House. Select committees are established only for the parliamentary term. Some examples of committees are |
| **Stonewalling** | the traditional practice of the Opposition of using the standing orders and speaking opportunities to delay measures so that sittings might stretch over days |
| **Westminster system** | the form of parliamentary democracy established in Britain and adopted in other countries such as New Zealand. It is a centralised form of legislature characterised by the dominance of Cabinet government over Parliament and based on a small number of cohesive political parties (usually two) competing for power and alternating in office. A simple majority in the debating chamber determines who holds power. Since the adoption of MMP, New Zealand has, to some extent, moved away from what had been a strongly developed Westminster system. |
| **Session** | the period during which the House sits from being summoned by the Governor-General until it is prorogued. In the past, this was usually a year. More recently, it has extended to the full parliamentary term of three years. |
| **Sitting** | the period during which the House sits before being adjourned, usually a single day. In the past, the period could be substantially longer as a result of stonewalls or the House sitting under urgency. |
| **Speaker** | the MP elected by his or her colleagues at the beginning of a Parliament to preside over the House and to act as the representative of the House in its relations with the sovereign. The Speaker chairs the House during its deliberations, controls its proceedings and decides on points of procedure. |
| **Standing orders** | the rules prescribing procedures by which the House is run. These include the swearing in of MPs, election of a Speaker, opening of Parliament, order of business, rules of debate and functions of select committees |

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